Lebanon Truce Committee, a Watchdog Without Teeth

BEIRUT — An international committee monitoring a cease-fire accord between Israel and Hezbollah for the past two months has come under increasing fire in Lebanon for its inability to impose sanctions.

"What authority can a committee have when it cannot adopt any measures? It is like a policeman without a stick, without a parking ticket or a gun," a senior Lebanese official complained.

(Contd on Pg. 14)

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Hamas Reviews "Practical Response" to Leader's Extradition

CAIRO, Egypt (AP) — The Islamic movement Hamas is discussing how to respond to a possible extradition of its leader who is jailed in the United States to Israel, an Arabic daily reported Sunday.

A federal judge ruled early this month that Mousa abu Marzuk, the political leader of Hamas, should be handed over to Israel for trial

The London-based Al-Hayat said the group's military wing, known as the Izzedine al Qassam Brigade, has been pushing its political leadership for authorization to carry out "a practical response" if Abu Marzuk is extradited.

(Contd on Pg. 14)

Will the Accords Between Iran, African States Be Implemented?



ALE-ES'HAQ



VELAYATI

FOCUS

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN — Nearly one month has passed since President Hashemi Rafsanjani conducted his six-nation tour of Africa, and now the question is: will the accords reached in the course of his tour be put into effect? The answer to the above question is important because the implementation of the agreements is a prerequisite for all future agreements to be signed between Iran and the African states.

The fact is that most of the accords are of economic and commercial nature, mainly relying on the private sector of the signatory countries. Thus to put the question in a more straightforward manner, it should be asked: can President Hashemi Rafsanjani encourage Iran's private sector to take steps towards implementation of the accords?

The most difficult point regarding encouraging the Iranian businessmen is convincing them of the profitability of making investments in Africa. In the first place, the uncertainties of the Iranian businessmen towards making investments in Africa should be removed. And secondly, the government should expound the facilities offered to those willing to make investments in Africa.

The Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati and Commerce Minister Yahya Ale-Es'haq expressed their views on the above matters in separate interviews with the *Tehran Times*.

Referring to the agreements reached and appropriate groundwork for the Iranian private sector in Africa, Velayati noted that the Iranian businessmen should become further acquainted with the circumstances in Africa and, in tandem, proper foundation for investment by the private sector

(Contd on Pg. 14)

Chirac Demands European Role in Mideast Peace Process

DAMASCUS, Syria (October 19): Syrian President Hafez el-Assad (R) gives an Omayah National Medal to French President Jacques Chirac in the presidential palace in Damascus. Chirac, given an hero's welcome in Syria, declared that Mideast peace was in danger and said Europe must co-sponsor Arab-Israeli negotiations, contributing proposals, not just money.

(AFP PHOTO)

DAMASCUS — French President Jacques Chirac held a second round of talks with Syrian leader Hafez al-Assad here Sunday after demanding a larger role for Europe in the troubled Middle East peace process.

"France and Europe must be present besides the parties, as friends, as a force for proposals and not just as partners in reconstruction," said Chirac at banquet in his honor hosted by Assad late Saturday.

The French leader insisted important changes needed to be made to the framework of the ongoing Middle East peace talks to allow Europe, the largest aid donor to the Palestinians, a sponsoring role alongside the United States.

The French leader. on the first stop of six-day Middle East tour, on Sunday began new talks with Assad on the peace process after three hours of talks late Saturday, Syrian officials said.

Chirac said in his banquet speech that it was essential "to improve the method and framework of the discussions which in recent months have revealed their limitations."

He was referring to the rapid deterioration in Israeli-Palestinian relations since Israeli Prime Min-

(Contd on Pg. 14)

President to Open Projects Worth Rls. 1,000 bn in Ardebil

ARDEBIL — President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani told a large group of people at a stadium here that such a big crowd reminded him of the fever and enthusiasm shown by the revolutionary people of Iran in the early days of the Islamic Revolution.

He said if on the early days of the Islamic Revolution, their revolutionary spirit encouraged people to take to the streets, today, the people do the same in light of their awareness and understanding of the state of affairs in their country.

President Rafsanjani said the popular turnout of people of Ardebil looked very beautiful for the friends and very bitter for the enemies.

Referring to the development plans underway throughout the country, the president said only in the next two days projects worth over Rls.1,000 billion will either be inaugurated or launched, something which indicates the large extent of reconstruction program in the country.

On the development of the provincial roads and railways, he said a railway would connect the ancient city of Mianeh, East Azarbaijan to Ardebil and then reach Azerbaijan Republic and that Ardebil would join Tabriz-Zanjan highway soon.

President Rafsanjani arrived in Ardebil on Sunday and was accorded a warm welcome by local people.

While addressing people at the stadium, all nearby streets were crowded by people keen to wel-

(Contd on Pg. 14)

Yandarbiyev Accuses Russia of Stalling on Peace

OREKHOVO, Russia — Chechen leader Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev accused Russia on Sunday of stalling on the peace process and on economic reconstruction in the shattered breakaway republic.

"The Russians are preparing to pay nothing," Yandarbiyev told a meeting with elders in this southwestern Chechen town. "They'll say that they have no money and will not pay anything."

A joint commission, which is to oversee the peace process Chechnya until elections are held, "talks a lot, but does nothing concrete," the separatist leader said.

Yandarbiyev also confirmed he had signed a decree appointing former Chechen chief of staff Aslan Maskhadov as prime minister of a provisional government due to run Chechnya until the elections, which separatists have said will take place on January 27.

The "coalition government" held its first meeting under Maskhadov on Saturday in the eastern Chechen town of Argun, he said. Interfax news agency said the meeting had concentrated on preparations for the presidential and parliamentary elections.

Yandarbiyev also expressed concern over the appointment in Moscow of former parliamentary speaker Ivan Rybkin to replace Alexander Lebed as Russia's top Chechnya negotiator.

"When he was (parliamentary) speaker, he did not seem to have much authority as a political personality," Yandarbiyev said, adding however that the removal of Chechnya peace architect Lebed was "an internal Russian affair."

(AFP)

Dostam Proposes Cease-Fire on All Afghan Fronts

ISLAMABAD — Afghan warlord General Abdul Rashid Dostam has proposed a countrywide cease-fire in Afghanistan from Monday noon (0730 GMT), a Taleban minister said Sunday.

The proposal was conveyed to the Taleban leadership by Pakistani Interior Minister Naseerullah Babar, who is currently engaged in shuttle diplomacy between the Afghan factions, Taleban's Deputy Foreign Minister Abdul Jalil said.

Babar who held a two-hour meeting with Dostam at his Mazar-i-Sharif base in northern Afghanistan earlier in the day, flew into the Islamic militia's headquarters in southwestern Qandahar city late Sunday.

Advancing ex-government forces fired rockets on Kabul international airport Sunday as the Taleban fundamentalist militia brought in hundreds of reinforcements to defend the city.

With a new battle for Kabul building, Taleban-controlled radio Kabul said at least 800 troops had arrived in the capital in the past two days to be deployed in northern frontline positions.

Rockets fired by troops loyal to the ousted government of President Burhanuddin Rabbani hit Kabul international airport and the Taleban were forced to evacuate some helicopters, witnesses said.

It was the first bombardment of Kabul airport by former government forces since they lost the capital to the Taleban on September 27.

Infantry and tanks of former government military commander Ahmad Shah Masood were said to be just 18 kilometers (12 miles) from Kabul and clashes between the Taleban and Masood fighters were said to be raging just 25 kilometers (15 miles) from the city.

Troops loyal to Masood said he had visited the front line Sunday and asked his men to be "ready to fight the Taleban if they do not leave Kabul."

Forces belonging to northern warlord Abdul Rashid Dostam were also advancing towards Kabul directly behind Masood's men, an AFP journalist saw Sunday.

Dostam has a defensive alliance with the former government, but has denied claims by Masood's forces that his troops have been fighting alongside them.

(Contd on Pg. 14)

KDP Meets Fierce Resistance From Rival

SALAHUDDIN, Iraq — Iraqi-backed Kurdish guerrillas met fierce resistance on Sunday as they tried to smash through the defenses around their rivals' stronghold of Sulaymaniyah.

The Kurdistan Democratic Party predicted it would capture Sulaymaniyah in 48 hours, but a western humanitarian said the KDP faced "tough resistance" in the key town of Dukan from the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK).

KDP guerrillas led by Massoud Barzani were "pounding Dukan with Howitzers while the PUK men are fighting back with mortar fire," said the worker who asked not to be named.

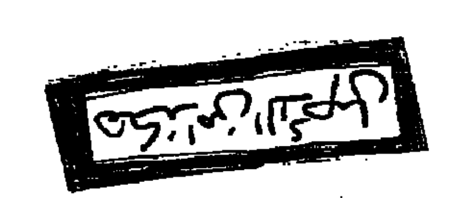
Dukan, which is the site of a hydro-electric plant that provides power to much of Iraqi Kurdistan, controls access to Sulaymaniyah, 50 kilometers (30 miles) further east.

The PUK also said it put up "heavy resistance" at Dukan and was locked in "ferocious fighting" with the KDP around Qala-Diza, another front around 70 kilometers (45 miles) north of Sulaymaniyah.

The PUK launched a counter-offensive against Barzani's forces 10 days ago, recapturing Sulaymaniyah and other territory it had lost last month to the Kurdish faction backed by Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

The PUK pushed the KDP back to the outskirts of the Kurdish capital of Arbil, which Barzani's fighters seized on August 31 with the help of Iraqi troops, but late last week the KDP launched a counter-attack of its own.

(Contd on Pg. 14)



هكذا من الأصل

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In the Name of Allah

He said: Cast. So when they cast, they deceived the people's eyes and frightened them, and they produced a mighty enchantment.

(HOLY QORAN)(7:116)

OPINION

Groundwork Prepared for Foreign Investment in Iran

President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani is currently on a tour to Ardabil Province. The trip is another link in the chain of his visits aimed at inaugurating development projects across the country.

One of the main objectives ever pursued by the Islamic Revolution has been forging a self-reliant economy to lay the foundation for Iran's self-sufficiency and prosperity. And it should be admitted by every Iranian citizen that President Hashemi Rafsanjani, during his two terms of presidency, has made great strides in achieving the above objective.

It is not forgotten yet that when the Iraqi-imposed war on Iran ground to a halt, the Islamic Republic of Iran had to import a considerable amount of basic commodities, building materials, and even some derivatives of petroleum in order to fulfill its domestic needs. There were frequent cases of load-shedding throughout Iran and the country faced serious hygienic problems.

With the implementation of the First Five Year Development Plan and the Second one presently under way, the country has not only attained self-reliance and self-sufficiency in most economic and industrial areas, but it has joined the circle of the exporting countries, which means that it is producing some commodities more than its domestic needs.

For instance, Iran is currently transferring electricity to its neighbors. It is also offering some other goods and services at the international market. Moreover, the foreign experts previously working in Iran for different industrial and scientific centers have mostly been replaced by the Iranian specialized work-force. Above all, today the Islamic Republic of Iran is sharing its experience in different fields with other countries, particularly those in the Third World.

Just a brief comparison between Iran and other countries in the region is enough to prove that the Islamic Republic enjoys the highest level of stability and security. Indeed, in the light of maximum security inside the country and at the Iranian borders, the government has been able to launch various development projects in remotest parts of Iran, even in the regions bordering on Afghanistan and Iraq.

With its solid economic infrastructure and optimum security, which is highest in the region, Iran is the fittest regional country for the foreign investment. It is hoped that Iran's trade partners would realize this without political prejudice.

Kazakh Weekly Praises Iran's Attempts to Stop Afghan War

ALMATY -- Kazakh weekly *Panorama* in its latest issue lauded Iran's efforts to stop war and bloodshed in Afghanistan.

The weekly added that Tehran and Almaty believe the Afghan crisis can be solved only through negotiations and cooperation of all Afghan groups.

Quoting Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati, *Panorama* said that the continuation of war in Afghanistan could make the whole region instable.

According to the weekly, Tehran and Almaty hold that international bodies especially the United Nations and the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) should play a more active role in putting an end to the crisis in Afghanistan. (IRNA)

Iran, Oman Ties Discussed

ABU DHABI, UAE — Omani Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Yousuf bin al-Alawi Abdullah and Iranian Ambassador to Oman Siyavash Zargar Ya'qouhi exchanged their views in a meeting Saturday in Muscat.

The talks centerd on the latest developments in the two countries' bilateral relations as well as regional issues of mutual interest. (IRNA)

Pakistani Ambassador Meets Larijani

TEHRAN -- Pakistani Ambassador to Tehran, Khalid Mahmood and Vice Chairman of the Majlis Foreign Policy Commission Mohammad Javad Larijani in a meeting here Sunday reviewed agenda of the session of the Coordinating Committee of the Islamic Inter-Parliamentary Union to be held in Tehran October 22-23.

A parliamentary delegation from Pakistan is due to arrive here Monday to attend the session. (IRNA)

President: Iran Has Good Opportunity to Help Reconstruct Africa

TEHRAN -- President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani on Saturday said that agreements reached during his six-nation African visit last September, has opened a good opportunity for Islamic Iran to help develop and reconstruct the African Continent.

He told the high council for following up the results of his African visit that Africa, in view of its vast territory, abundant water resources and inexpensive and hardworking manpower, has all the potentials for economic development.

Referring to the vain attempts of the U.S. to pressure African states against broadening their relations with Iran, Rafsanjani said the African states and people have evaluated the benefits of trade and economic ties with Islamic Iran and are ready to become free of the monopolist policies of the West.

During his African visit, the Iranian president succeeded in breaking the ice between Uganda and Sudan, a move which greatly displeased Washington. Earlier this month, Tehran hosted a meeting between the representatives of the two countries following resurfacing of tension.

Before the president's speech, Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati presented a report on the success of Rafsanjani's visit, and said that the people of Africa have high hopes attached to Iran's role in contributing to their economic development.

At the end of Saturday's session, five expert committees in the political, trade, economic, cultural, and technical and medical services fields were formed to study the prospects of Iran's contribution to Africa.

The Construction Jihad Ministry of Iran is already engaged in development projects in several African countries. On Thursday last, Iran Air started a flight to Nairobi via Dubai, and has promised to extend its services to other African capitals.

The six African nations visited by President Rafsanjani last September were Kenya, Uganda, Sudan, Tanzania, Zimbabwe and South Africa. (IRNA)

Velayati Receives Emma Nicholson



TEHRAN — A member of the House of Commons in Britain Emma Nicholson, in a meeting here Sunday with Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati, outlined activities of her organization in the Persian Gulf and Middle Eastern countries.

Nicholson, who is also the Chairwoman of an international non-governmental organization called Assisting Marsh Arabs and Refugees (AMAR), said that AMAR is mainly engaged in providing the refugees and homeless people with food, sanitary items, education and employment.

The main aim behind her visit to Iran was to inspect the refugee camps set up in Iran for the Iraqi Kurdish refugees, she said, adding that she will study ways of conducting the relief operations in coordination with the Iranian organizations working in this connection.

Referring to millions of refugees from neighboring countries stationed in Iran, Velayati said that the Islamic Republic has always been active in giving shelter to refugees and supplying them with humanitarian aid. (IRNA)

Iranian Embassy Denies Iran's Involvement in N. Iraq Developments

ANKARA -- Iranian Embassy in Ankara on Sunday dismissed as baseless the allegation raised by Turkish daily *Yeni Shafak* that Iran was involved in developments in Northern Iraq.

Issuing a statement, the embassy said Iranian diplomacy is based on non-interference of other countries in Iraq's internal affairs and protection of its territorial integrity.

The statement said that false propaganda which is spread against Iran, once in a while by certain rival factions involved in clashes in northern Iraq when they suffer set-back, are used by certain biased segments of the press.

The embassy said Iran's good will is focused on settling the disputes between warrying parties in Northern Iraq and the only link the Islamic Republic of Iran has established with Northern Iraq, is confined to its dispatch of humanitarian relief aid for the innocent Muslim people in a bid to alleviate their sufferings. (IRNA)

Nazirov Promoted as First Tajik Ambassador to Tehran

DUSHANBE — Tashmat Nazirov has been appointed as Tajikistan's first ever ambassador to the Islamic Republic.

Nazirov had been serving as the charge d'affaires of his country since the opening of the Tajik mission in Tehran.

The announcement by Tajik President, Imomali - Rakhmanov, which was aired by Dushanbe TV on Friday night, underlined the importance of Iran-Tajikistan bilateral relations. (IRNA)

Yazdi Gives Advice on Employing Well-Trained Census Takers

TEHRAN — Conducting census is an important and sensitive task whose results would be of use in future decisionmakings by managers, said Head of the Judiciary Ayatollah Mohammad Yazdi here Sunday.

Speaking to the head and staffers of Iran's Statistics Center on the eve of the upcoming public census on housing and population, the ayatollah said that the statistics would serve as a real and accurate instrument that would make any manager successful if used properly.

He said that since planning will be a necessity of all human societies, well-trained and patient census takers should be employed in the forthcoming public census.

Meanwhile, head of the center, Abbas Ali Zali said that some 60,000 census takers of whom 55,000 have undergone necessary courses would launch the public census in a 25-day period beginning from October 22. (IRNA)

Repatriation of Iraqi Kurdish Refugees Stopped

SULAIMANIYEH -- Governor General of Sulaymaniyeh Salar Aziz Esmael stressed here Saturday that return of Iraqi Kurdish refugees, stationed at Iranian refugee camps, to northern Iraq has become impossible.

The governor general of this northern Iraqi province added that repatriation of the Kurdish refugees has been stopped due to the recapture of Koysanjak, Heybat Sultan heights and Halabjah. (IRNA)

Int'l Summit on Religion and Contemporary World to Open

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN — The International Summit on Religion and the Contemporary World is to open in Tehran next month, said head of the Islamic and Cultural Relations Organization, Hojjatoleslam Mohammad Ali Taskhiri at a press conference here yesterday.

Taskhiri underlined that the summit will host ten prominent figures and thinkers from the International Council of Churches who will exchange views on different subjects with Muslims intellectuals at the summit.

He added that a variety of topics including the Role of Religion in the Modern World, the Role of Religion in World morality, the Role of Religion in the Modern World, Religion and the Human Rights, Religion and Peace, Religion and Justice, Religion and Environment and the Role of Religion in Social and Economic Balance of the Society.

Referring to ample grounds for cooperation among different religions, Taskhiri said that Islam has always emphasized on inter-religions dialogue.

He pointed out that holding dialogue among representatives of different religions will help the followers of those religions to pinpoint the common links which exist among them. This will pave the ground for further cooperation among different religions.



Enumerating the main measures taken by the Islamic Republic of Iran in recent years to promote the relations among different religions, Taskhiri said the dialogues held with the Greek Orthodox Society, British Protestant Society, Vatican Catholic Society and Austrian Catholic Society are among those measures.

As for the future programs of the Islamic and Cultural Propagation Organization, Taskhiri underlined the organization is to further hold dialogue with French Catholic Society, Russian Orthodox Society, American Orthodox Society and the Brazilian Christian Society in the future.

The International Summit on Religion and Contemporary World will open on November 23 and run through November 24.

Iran for Ratification of Chemical Weapons Convention

TEHRAN — Deputy Secretary of the Convention on Chemical Weapons Shokat Omar, who is currently in Iran, conferred with Vice President for Legal and Parliamentary Affairs Ataollah Mohajerani here Sunday.

Mohajerani, saying that Iran is one the victims of chemical weapons, proposed that production and use of chemical weapons be banned.

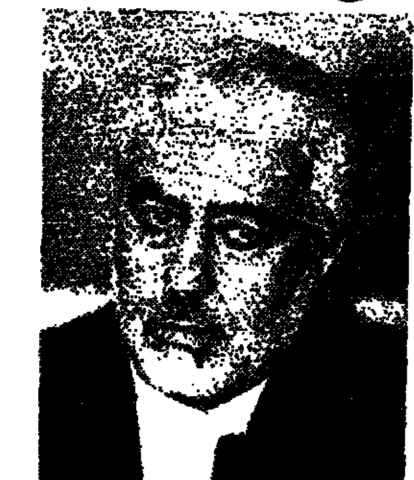
The Iranian vice president voiced Iran's readiness to contribute to the ratification of the Chemcial Weapons Convention but noted that the convention will not be so effective if not endorsed by some countries like the United States and the Russian Federation which are among major producers of such weapons and which have voiced their opposition to the convention. (IRNA)

Government to Prevent Rise in Foreign Exchange Rates

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN - The government prevents any rise in the parity rates of hard currencies because it will lower the purchasing power of the national currency, said Minister of Economy and Financial Affairs Morteza Mohammad-Khan here Sunday.

Mohammad-Khan, addressing a gathering of directors of the financial organization for expansion of ownership of manufacturing units, said that among major plans adopted by the government are to curb rising inflation, increase purchasing power of the public and strengthen the national currency, IRNA reported.



However, he added government's main policy was to check the rate of inflation.

The minister called on producers not to seek increased profits through lower production and higher prices.

He said that at present replacing imports constitutes a part of the industrial policy of the country, adding that enhancement of exports will be pursued in the course of Iran's Second Five-Year Development Plan (1995-1999) as a complementary measure which itself requires an increase in the quality of products and reduced wastes.

Touching on the rise in production in the country over recent years, Mohammad-Khan said that Iran's petrochemical output had reached 10 million tons, whereas the figure stood at 400,000 tons at the outset of the First Five-Year Development Plan (1989-1993).

He said that Iran was slef-sufficient in the area of producing construction materials and there was no need to import them.

Despite having limited water resources, he added, growth in the agriculture sector has remained nearly stable, but the industry sector is expected to show a growth rate of 18 percent in case of due planning.

Concluding his remarks, he said that Iran's hard currency shortage has been improved in recent years, adding that the government is to boost the industry sector in order to make the optimum use of the existing production potential of the country.

Banker of Poor Awarded

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN - Managing Director of the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh, Muhammad Yunus, earlier this week received the 1996 International Simon Bolivar Prize in recognition of his contribution to helping eliminate poverty and improving the status of women in rural areas of Bangladesh.

A press release issued by the UN Information Center here Sunday added that UNESCO director general Fedrico Mayor presented the $25,000 prize at the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) headquarters.

A certificate and a Simon Bolivar bronze medal were also presented to Yunus, known as "the banker of the poor" at the ceremony in Paris, it said.

The Grameen Bank was established to assist the poor, particularly women, in avoiding loan sharks.

President Underlines Importance of Upcoming Population Census

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN - President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani in a meeting on Saturday with executive officials of the Nationwide Housing and Population Census scheduled for this year, said the objective of the 1996 census was to plan the future of the country and help create a glorious Islamic civilization.

Rafsanjani said that in view of the rapid changes over the past ten years in urban and rural development and public amenities, it was necessary to have an orderly and exact information of the country's infrastructure in order to plan and carry out long-term development projects, IRNA reported.

He termed the census as a "big Islamic and national service", and said that efforts should be made to collect precise information from the people.

The president called as "unprecedented" around the world the vast economic achievements of the Islamic Republic of Iran over the last decade, and said the census will also confirm the historical results of the reconstruction projects of the country.

17 Iranian Companies in Tunisia Trade Fair

Tehrna Times Service

TEHRAN - The Islamic Republic of Iran is represented by 17 manufacturing companies in the International Trade Fair in Tunisia, IRNA reported.

The Tunisian Prime Minister and minister of commerce attended the inaugural ceremony of the fair held on Friday.

Iranian Ambassador to Tunisia M. Mozafari also present in the ceremony said that Iran's participation in international exhibitions will prepare the ground for further enhancement of the country's non-oil exports.

He also underlined the importance of upgrading the quality of Iranian products in order to be sold on world markets.

Iran has put on display over 63 items of its products such as carpets and manufactured goods in a 450 square meter pavilion at the fair.

Altogether 40 countries among them Germany, France, Japan, Russia, England, U.S., and China are taking part in the 10-day exhibition.

FOREIGN EXCHANGE RATES

The following table shows the foreign exchange rates in rials as released by the Central Bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran on Sunday, Oct 20,1996.

COUNTRY	UNIT	Floating Rates BUY	Floating Rates SELL	Export Rates BUY	Export Rates SELL
Australia	dollar	1,387	1,395	2,381	2,393
Austria	schilling	161	162	276	278
Belgium	(100)francs	5,500	5,531	9,441	9,489
Canada	dollar	1,295	1,303	2,224	2,235
Denmark	krone	296	298	508	511
France	franc	335	337	576	579
Germany	mark	1,133	1,140	1,946	1,955
Holland	guilder	1,010	1,016	1,734	1,743
Italy	(100)liras	114	115	195	196
Japan	(100)yen	1,558	1,567	2,674	2,688
Swiss	franc	263	265	452	454
UAE	dirham	476	479	818	820
UK	pound	2,775	2,791	4,765	4,788
U.S.	dollar	1,750	1,755	3,000	3,015

Labor Ministers of Iran and Azerbaijan Meet

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN - Iranian Minister of Labor and Social Affairs Hussein Kamali here Thursday in a meeting with Azeri Minister of Labor and Social Protection Alkar Rahimov discussed issues of mutual interest.

The two ministers exchanged views on ways of deploying Iran's experiences in the areas of technical and vocational training and employment, IRNA reported.

Rahimov, who is here heading a delegation, is to inspect a number of manufcturing and industrial units as well as technical and vocational training centers.

Tehran-Seoul Discuss Economic Cooperation

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN - South Korean Ambassador to Tehran Kim Jae Kyu here on Saturday called for development of economic cooperation between Tehran and Seoul, IRNA reported.

In a meeting with Interior Minister Ali Mohammad Besharati, Kim hoped that the upcoming session of the Tehran-Seoul Joint Economic Commission to be held in November would help accelerate the growing trade of cooperation between the two countries.

The South Korean ambassador also appreciated Iran's humanitarian assistance to about two million foreign refugees.

Besharati said in response that the Islamic Republic of Iran is interested in developing relations with South Korea in all areas and would share experiences with Seoul in the fight against drug trafficking and terrorism through the International Police (Interpol).

He also pointed out Iran's strategic geopolitical location, and said the Islamic Republic serves as a bridge between the Central Asian and Southeast Asian Nations following the opening of the Mashhad-Sarakhs-Tajan railway last May.

Besharati voiced Iran's readiness to facilitate transit of goods between South Korea and the Central Asian republics.

Iran to Fly Its Own Helicopter Next Year

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN - The Iranian made helicopter "Shahed X-5" would be flown next year, said Managing Director of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps' (IRGC) Institute of Industrial Research and Development here on Saturday.

Seyed Saeed Ziaie, told IRNA that 70 percent of the helicopter's parts have been designed and built by Iranian experts.

The 4-seat helicopter with a speed of 400 kms per hour has been designed to fly at a maximum altitude of 4,500 meters, he said.

Ziaie added the IRGC industries have plans to mass-produce 50 Shahed X-5s annually if the necessary resources and financial support is provided.

In related news, head of the Martyr Kharrazi Research Center for Copter Industries, Jalal Fallah, said Saturday that the prototype of another helicopter "Shahed X-4" has been successfully tested.

The centre started working on helicopter technology in 1985.

Saturday's Trading at TSE

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN - A total of 8,301,129 shares, worth over Rls.28.7 billion were traded in 1,694 turns for 791 applicants here at the Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE) on Saturday.

In yesterday's deals, share prices of 51 companies increased, while those of 35 others declined.

The general index price of shares for Saturday reached 2,127.73 points, indicating a fall of 26 points compared to that of Wednesday.

Rls.27bn for Dredging Bahmanshir River

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN - Some Rls.27 billion out of the credit, earmarked to renovation and reconstruction of war-torn regions, has been set aside for cleansing southwestern Iranian river, Bahmanshir, in Khuzestan, of explosives and sunken ships remained from the Iraqi Imposed War (1980-88).

Head of the headquarters for reconstruction and renovation of war-stricken regions, Gholam-Hussein Abdollahi said Sunday that about 90 percent of the sunken ships and materials have been spotted and pulled out of the river.

Tehran, Chittagong Stock Markets Ink Cooperation Protocol

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN - Iran and Bangladesh here on Saturday inked a protocol of cooperation between the Tehran and Chittagong stock exchange markets, IRNA reported.

The protocol was signed by Secretary General of the Tehran Stock Exchange, Allah-Vardi Rajaei Salmasi, and the head of Chittagong's Stock Exchange Amir-Khosrow Mahmud Choudhari.

Choudhari said the protocol would pave the way for the two sides to exchange information on joint stock markets.

Choudhari, saying that Iran has agreed to help build Bangladesh an oil refinery, expressed hope that Tehran and Chittagong stock markets would offer joint shares for construction of the said refinery to interested parties in the two countries.

Bangladesh was one of the four countries which attended the Second Assembly of the Asia-European Stock Exchange Federation held in Isfahan last week.

APEC Members Asked to Report on Free Trade

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN - Members of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum will be asked to submit self-assessments of how close they are to achieving APEC's commitment of a free trade region by 2020, an official said Sunday in Manila, as quoted by AFP.

Edsel Custodio, head of the Philippine delegation to an APEC senior officials' meeting in Manila, said "we are asking them ... (to) submit a self-assessment of your present position and how near or how far you are from Bogor and how you will traverse that line in general."

The 18 member economies in APEC committed in Bogor, Indonesia, in 1994, to create a free trade area by 2010 for developed nations and 2020 for developing nations.

Custodio also said that all but four of the 18-APEC member economies had submitted the required revised individual free trade plans ahead of an October 30 deadline.

Frederico Macaranas, chairman of the meeting, said most of the revised free trade plans conformed to a common format agreed upon by APEC to allow them to compare each economy's pace of liberalization.

In the past, the various free trade plans could not be compared because they did not provide details or use common terms of reference.

He said the revised plans were more specific, allowing analysts to track the progress of the economies towards free trade but he admitted that some submissions were delayed because of "domestic concerns faced by various economies."

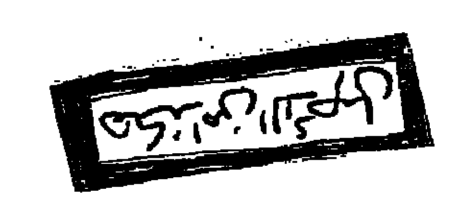
He did not identify the economies which had not yet submitted their plans, but earlier officials said Japan was concerned about the change in governments.

The so-called Individual Action Plans (IAPs), outlining each member's commitment to tear down trade barriers, need to be ready for next month's meeting of APEC ministers and summit of APEC leaders to be hosted by the Philippines.

The IAPs will be used in forging the Manila Action Plan, to be issued after the APEC leaders' summit.

Regarding economies that might not submit fully revised IAPs in time, Macaranas said "we leave it to the better judgement of senior officials and ministers," to decide what to include in the Manila Action Plan.

Macaranas said the APEC members also completed most of the collective action plans covering 15 different sectors ranging from tariffs, intellectual property, investments, government procurement and mobility of business people.



The Ranks of Man as the Holy Qoran Says

By Ayatollah Jawadi Amoli

The Qoran first says man reaches a place beyond the cosmic realm and does something the heavens, the earth and the hills are unable to do. and then says the hills, the heavens and the earth are better than man. If man perceives the divine trust to bear, he goes beyond the cosmic realm. And if he remains in abysmal ignorance, he is as said in the Qoranic verse:

"The likeness of those who are entrusted with the law of Moses, yet apply it not, is as the likeness of the ass carrying books." (62:5)

It is man and his material insight; it is man and his material power; it is man and his somacentrism. The Almighty Allah says:

"Assuredly the creation of the heavens and the earth is greater than the creation of mankind..." (40:57)

Elsewhere, the Almighty says:

".... Lo! You cannot rend the earth, nor can you stretch to the heights of the hills..."(17:37)

You are a body of about 80 or 100 kilos of rock. The earth and the hills are heavier than you: the heavens are higher than you. The Qoran says:

"Are you the harder to create, or is the heaven that He had built? He raised the height thereof and ordered it: And he made dark the night thereof, and He brought forth the moon thereof." (79:27 to 29).

Man is an arena of trade of inestimable value. He is doomed to be completely crushed or reach beyond the cosmic realm He oscillates between the Zenith and Nadir.

Human body as a tool in all the aspects of the world:

Although soul is the very truth of man, he has his some (body) with him in the earthly world, in the purgatory and in the hereafter. Soma is not the whole, nor a part of the truth of man: but a tool. We all have body but it is the soul that does everything. All pains and all ease are felt by the soul. If our hand is injured it is the sense of touch that feels the pain, not the hand itself. If the sense of touch is stupefied and the hand is amputated, no pain is felt. What feels the pain is the soul. Your Jaws move, your teeth chew the food, but your taste relishes. You drink limpid water, i.e.., you take water into your mouth and swallow it, but it is the soul that quenches the thirst. Although we have a body, it is the soul that does everything. Body is no more than a tool that transfers the soul hither and thither.

This holds true with infernal people, Almighty Allah says:

"Lo! Those who disbelieve Our revelations, We shall expose them to the Fire. As often as their skins are consumed We shall exchange them for fresh skins that they may taste the torment."(4:56)

Hence, as we have a body in our earthy lives, we have it in other worlds and the body comes next to the soul in importance.

Exemplary Women in the Holy Qoran (1)

The Qoran emphasizes on the personality of women:

The perfection in women's character referred to in the Qoran, is because when Allah saw a menace to something, He laid great stress on it. For instance, when the Qoran was revealed, there was a menace to monotheism and polytheism was prevalent. To establish firmly monotheism and uproot polytheism, many verses were revealed. And since the status of woman was not duly respected during the revelation of the Qoran, her status and respect was emphasized and the equality of rights was recognized for women in all steps of life. The Qoran cites many parables to ascertain the standard of value in various phases of life for men and women alike.

The three faculties of soul

In human nature, there are three faculties:

Faculty of attraction; faculty of repulsion; and faculty of thinking. The Qoran counts the host of reason and ignorance to be one hundred and fifty - for reason seventy-five and for ignorance seventy-five, and describes them in three categories:

One category for knowledge and thought, one for attraction, i.e., passion, and the third for repulsion, i.e., anger.

What we see in ourselves and what we remember from others denote that our acts are summed up in these categories. If moral writings stress on these three standards, it is because morality is for purification of the soul and the faculties thereof.

Man has thought and the faculty of thinking has attraction and faculty of attracting and has repulsion and faculty of repulsing. All human acts refer to these three faculties and the "major justice" is the adjustment thereof. The Qoran gives examples for each of these categories.

Symbol of Knowledge

As far as knowledge is concerned, the teaching of the names is to be regarded within the scope of human nature. The Qoran says:

"The Adam received from his Lord words (of revelation)..." (2:37)

What is meant by "words", is the light of the sacred progeny of the Prophet (S) and that light is the knowledge that Adam (S) received as his salvation. Hazrat Ali (AS) and Hazrat Zahra (SA) are two typical symbols of the sacred progeny. The reason for the fame and glory of Hazrat Zahra (SA) is not that she is virtue incarnate among all women. It is because she puts others in the shade. All the other infallible Imams (AS) are not so well-known as Hazrat Ali (AS) and so it is with Hazrat Zahra (SA) among other women.

In short, the words of revelation refer to the names of Allah of which the most typical symbols are the sacred progeny of Prophet (S) and among them Hazrat Zahra (SA) is a brilliant star of the first magnitude.

The Qoran, in explanation of the faculty of attraction and making known the most outstanding figure of piety and virtue, refers

Women in the Mirror of the Divine Glory

to both male and female. Now let us see which one was more virtuous.

Joseph and Mary, two symbols of virtue

The male and the female mentioned in the Qoran are Joseph (AS) and Mary (SA). The angels say in the Qoran:

"O Mary! Lo Allah has chosen you pure, and has preferred you above (all) the women of creation." (3:42)

The two of them were endowed with fine morals of which the Qoran cites. But, the most remarkable attribute of them is their chastity and continence. Both withstood seduction and were delivered from evil. As for Joseph, the Qoran says:

"She verily desired him and he would have desired her if it had not been that he saw the argument of his Lord." (12:24

The salient pointed out here is that - that Egyptian woman made every effort to seduce Joseph (AS), but not only he loathed the evil act, but also he shuddered at the thought of it, for he saw the argument of his Lord.

There are also many other Qoranic citations that Allah speaks of Joseph as a purified, innocent slave, as follow:

"Save such of them as are your perfectly devoted slaves."(15:40)

This is the minor premise of the syllogism. The major premise of the syllogism is that Satan said he could not tempt Allah's perfectly devoted slaves. And the culumniators finally confessed that Joseph was pure and free of sin. The Qoran says:

"....said the wife of the ruler, 'Now the truth is out. I asked him (Joseph) an evil act, and he is surely of the truthful." (12:51)

Almighty Allah also testified to the purity and godliness of Joseph and said: "And verily We know the eager among you and verily We know the laggards...." (12:24)

Here Allah did not say that He had not forbidden Joseph to do sin, but that He had not allowed sin to seduce him.

As for Mary (SA), we see that she was as pure and sinless as Joseph, or she was superior to him in piety. As far as chastity is concerned, we do net venture to say that if Mary had not seen the argument of her Lord, she would have desired, but we would like to point out what Mary said: "She said, 'Lo! I seek refuge in the beneficent one from you, if you are God-fearing." (19:18)

This was when Allah says: "Then We sent unto her Our spirit and it assumed for her the likeness of a perfect man." (19:17)

Y He denotes that not only Mary (SA) would not have desired, but also she forbids the angel appearing to her like a perfect man not to do a sin. Another instance of forbidding the wrong is the Qoranic verse: "It is only the devil who would make (man fear his partisans. Fear them not; fear Me, if you are true believers." (3:175)

Elsewhere the Qoran says: "And if they answer not your prater, then know that it is revealed only in the knowledge of Allah; and that there is no God save him. Will you then be (of) those who surrender? (11:14. Or "... and to turn you from remembrance of Allah and from (His) worship. Will you then have done?" (5:91)

Now let us see who brought up Mary? She was not brought up by any other woman than her mother. There are many good humans, but they cannot be parents for a child like Mary. There should be too many requisites for a man or woman to vow his (her) child to Allah as a cause-created offering and for it to be accepted by Allah. Mary's mother sought refuge in Allah for her child and Allah accepted it.

Mary's Mother Seeking Refuge

When Mary (AS) was born, her mother said:

"I crave your protection for her and for her offspring from Satan the outcast." (3:37)

(Contd on Pg. 15)

Taliban Close Women's Bath Houses for Being "Un-Islamic"

KABULI - Kabul's new fundamentalist Taliban rulers have shut down the city's usually-bustling women's bath houses, branding them an "Un-Islamic Institution," local residents said Saturday.

The Taliban-controlled Kabul municipality last week sent a letter to the city's 32 public baths reserved for women, ordering them to close their doors with immediate effect, a bath house owner told AFP.

"We were told in the letter to close down because women's going to public baths is un-Islamic as far as the Taliban are concerened," Mohammed Hassan said.

"One bath was fined 500,000 afghanis (31 dollars) by the Taliban two days ago for violating the order and opening its doors to



women," he said.

No Taliban official was immediately available for comment on the closure or on why the baths are deemed to be un-Islamic, but locals said the baths were probably frowned upon because it invited women to wander the city "unescorted and unnecessarily."

Other sources however said that a handful of women's communal baths in west Kabul had flouted the order, which came as the first signs of winter began to take their grip on the battered Afghan capital.

The order to shut down the baths, a feature of every day life for most residents of Kabul which had been deprived of running water and electricity for more than three years, has outraged women here.

"I don't know how I'm going to be able to wash myself and have a warm bath now in the absence of electricity and running water in my house," a 50-year-old woman who refused to be identified said.

"I'm very angry because the Taliban have deprived us of an essential facility which we have always used and used to enjoy as well," she added.

The traditional baths — or ham'mams — which cost users about six cents for a steam bath have almost completely replaced private bathing facilities in Kabul, where most public amenities have been destroyed or suspended during more than four years of civil war.

The baths are mostly used in winter when temperatures in the city can plummet to below minus 20 degrees celcius and when it is too cold for Kabulis — who battle to feed themselves, let alone heat their homes — to bathe at home with water brought from freezing wells.

Scores of ancient ham'mams — most of which have two distinct sections with separate entrances for men and women — are dotted across the city and its sprawling suburbs, inhabited by about 1.2 million people.

The baths — common to Central Asia — are also used as communal meeting places for relaxation and gossip, especially for women who generally enjoy little leisure time between working and caring for their families, locals said.

In the past, mothers are said to have used ham'mams as a hunting ground for prospective brides for their sons who did not have the opportunity to gauge the beauty of women for themselves as females were covered from head to foot in public under Islamic law.

The order shutting women's baths is the latest in a line of decrees restricting women's behavior to be issued by the Taliban since they overran Kabul three weeks ago.

Females, who have for decades been allowed to work and be educated in the capital and other major Afghan cities, were barred from offices and school by the Taliban militia after they seized power here.

In addition, they have been ordered not to go out "unnecessarily" and have been warned to be fully covered by traditional Islamic dress if they have to venture out.

The new regulations represent a serious blow to thousands of Kabulis, as more than 30,000 widows are the only bread winners in their usually very large families.

Most of the Afghan civil service here was run by women, while scores of foreign aid agencies also depend on women to keep key humanitarian projects operating.

The United Nations has warned the Taliban that foreign aid to Afghanistan could be halted if they fail to alter their stance on women, while the European Union has urged the World Community to deny the new Kabul leadership much-needed recognition on the same grounds.

The fundamentalist Taliban took control of the once relatively liberal city on September 27 after the government of deposed president Burhanuddin Rabbani fled the city. (AFP)

SPORTS SUMMARY

(Tehran Times Service)

SOCCER

LONDON - Coventry goalkeeper Steve Ogrizovic accused Arsenal striker Ian Wright of deliberately breaking his nose in an explosive incident at Highbury on Saturday.

The clash, five minutes before the end of their goalless draw in the English Premier League -- which was enough to take Arsenal to the top of the table -- ended with Ogrizovic being carried off on a stretcher five minutes before the end of the game with blood all over his face.

MADRID - Davor Suker scored a hat-trick on Saturday to help lift Real Madrid to an impressive 6-1 win over Real Sociedad. The victory left Fabio Capello's side as leaders of the Spanish first division, albeit possibly for a while only.

With 18 points from eight games Real Madrid are one point ahead of Barcelona, who play Logrones on Sunday, and three ahead of Deportivo Coruna, whose game against Espanyol kicked off late.

Suker and Predrag Mijatovic, who found the net twice, helped Real come back from an early goal down to put together their best performance of the season.

PARIS - Nigeria's Viktor Ikpeba led Monaco to a 4-1 victory over neighbouring nice on Saturday, taking the team from the principality to second place in the French first division.

Ikpeba, who scored twice for Monaco in their 4-2 victory over Borussia Moenchengladbach in the UEFA Cup on Tuesday, grabbed two more in the French Riviera clash after Nice had taken an early lead. Brazil's Sonny Anderson also scored twice.

The victory put pressure on Auxerre, who travel to the French capital for an appetizing clash with league leaders Paris St Germain on Sunday.

ZURICH - Swiss teenager Martina Hingis reached her second final in seven days with a 3-6 6-2 7-6 win over Germany's Anke Huber at the European indoor championship on Saturday.

The semifinal was a rematch of last week's final in Filderstadt where Hingis recorded her first career tournament success.

CYCLING

LONDON - Double world track champion Graeme Obree, whose season has been ruined by a viral infection, is not ready to quit cycling yet.

Responding to a report in the French sports newspaper L'Equipe that he was to retire, the 31-year-old Scot said on Saturday: "I am reconsidering because I have been heartened by two things.

HORSE RACING

NEWMARKET, England - Top Filly Bosra Sham won the champion stakes on Saturday, virtually clinching the 1996 trainers' title for Henry Cecil and effecting a reconciliation between Cecil and Dubai's Sheikh Mohammed.

The two men have not spoken to each other for some considerable time after splitting in acrimonious circumstances last year over the training of mark of esteem who has proved this season to be Europe's top miler.

BASEBALL

NEW YORK - In the opening game of the World Series between the New York Yankees and the Atlanta Braves has been postponed until Sunday because of heavy rain all day Saturday. we have run a story.

Holmes Retains WBC Middleweight Title

WASHINGTON -- American Keith Holmes stopped Briton Richie Woodhall in the 12th round on Saturday to keep his World Boxing Council Middleweight Title.

Woodhall, the European Champion, suffered the first defeat of his pro career when the referee stopped the fight at 2:32 of the final round.

Holmes, who took his record to 30-1 with 20 knockouts, was evenly matched through most of the fight, but went on the attack in the final three rounds.

He knocked Woodhall down with a right uppercut in the 12th. the challenger got up and continued, but was unable to answer Holmes' blows and the fight was stopped. Woodhall fell to 21-1 with 13 knockouts.

(AFP)



LYON, France (October 19): French referee Gilles Veissiele (R) and members of the team of Metz observe a minute of silence for the victims of the Guatemala City tragedy before the first division match opposing Lyon to Metz in Lyon.

(AFP PHOTO)

Seventy Cars Set Off on Hong Kong-Beijing Car Rally

HONG KONG -- Seventy cars set off from this British colony Saturday on the first leg of the grueling 3,800-kilometer (2,356-mile) 555 Hong Kong-Beijing Rally, the last time the event will be held.

Leading the drivers as they roared off from Stonecutter's Island was defending champion Kenneth Eriksson of Sweden and his co-driver and compatriot Staffan Parmander in a Subaru Impreza 555.

Trailing behind them was the 1993 winner, Ari Vatanen of Finland, driving a Mitsubishi Lancer.

Both Eriksson and Vatanen are attempting to become the first driver to win the event twice.

Other drivers included Britain's Richard Burns in a Mitsubishi Lancer and Italian Piero Liatti in a Subaru Impreza 555, and Japanese Yoshio Fujimoto, driving a Toyota GT-4.

The race, which ends next Friday in Beijing's Tiananmen Square, covers some of roughest terrain in China. Last year, only 27 of the 44 cars that started the event finished the rally, which was first run in 1985.

Organizers said next year's race will be shortened to a three-day competition under the world rally championship format.

(AP)

Eubank Knocks Out Barrera in Fifth Round

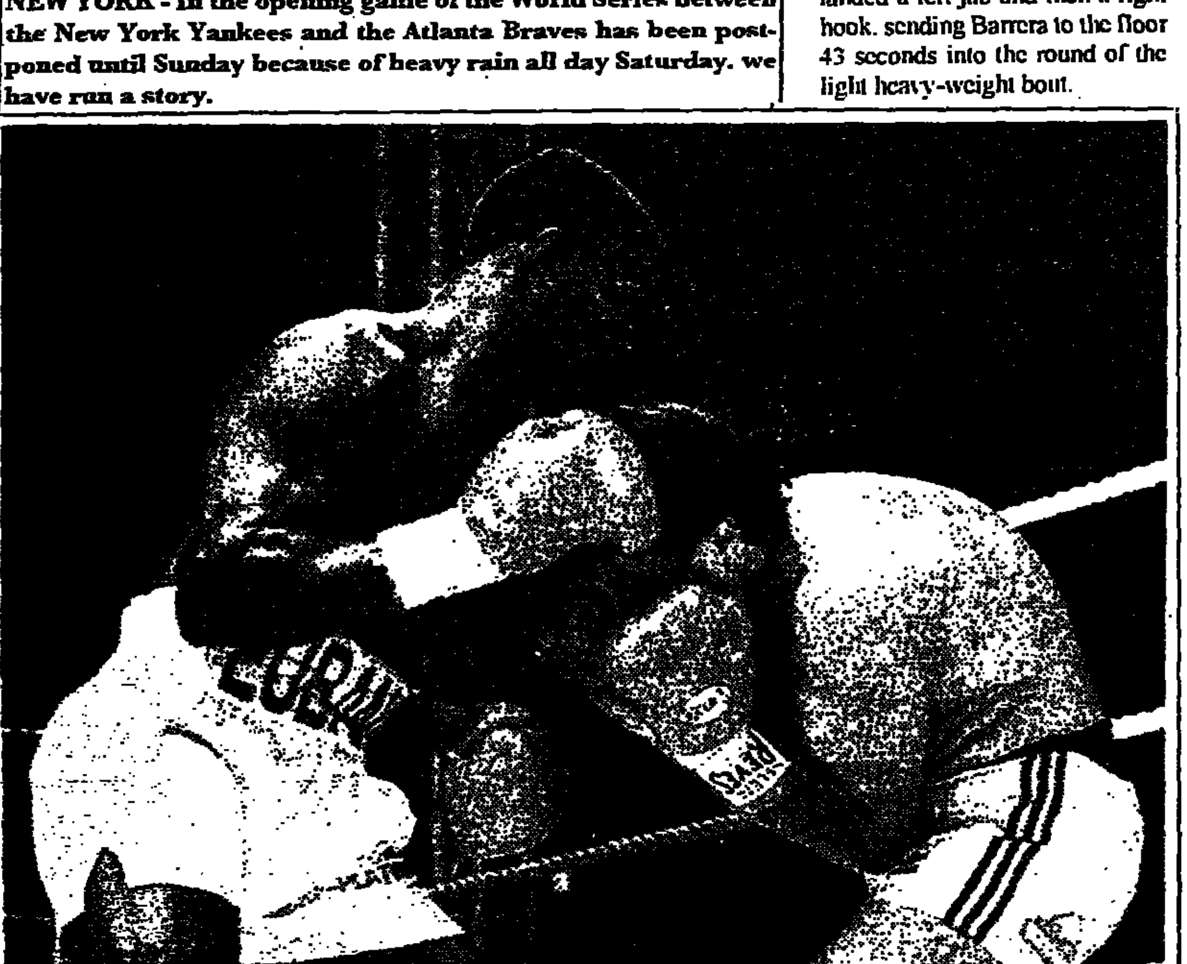
CAIRO, Egypt -- Britain's former champion Chris Eubank returned to the ring after a year-long absence with a fifth-round knockout Saturday of Argentina's Luis Barrera.

After a slow start, Eubank landed a left jab and then a right hook, sending Barrera to the floor 43 seconds into the round of the light heavy-weight bout.

Eubank, 30, a former wbo middleweight and super-middleweight champion, took command of the match in the third round with punishing left jabs that kept the outmatched Barrera on the defensive. Eubank strutted around the ring after each round.

Eubank, who weighed 78.3%logmms (174 pounds), improved his record to 44-3-2. the 33-year-old Barrera, also weighing 78.3 kilograms (174 pounds), dropped to 35-8-5 with his fifth consecutive loss.

Eubank's successful comeback came a year after he announced his retirement following a second defeat by Irishman Steve Collins, the fighter who took Eubank's title in march 1995. *(AP)*



CAIRO, Egypt (October 19): British world super middleweight champion Chris Eubark (L) strikes Argentinian challenger Louis Barrera (R), knocking him down to win the match in Cairo.

(AFP PHOTO)

Kenyan, Three-Time Boston Winner to Try New York

NEW YORK -- Kenyan Cosmas Ndeti, winner of three consecutive Boston marathons, is going to try the New York city marathon for the first time.

Race Director Allan Steinfeld announced Ndeti's entry on Saturday.

With a best-clocking of 2 hours, 7 minutes and 15 seconds, Ndeti is the fatest runner entered in the Nov. 3 race.

Ndeti won the Boston marathon each year from 1993 to 1995, but his streak was stopped last spring when he finished third in 2;09:51. *(AP)*

Doohan and Criville Fume After Final Lap Crash

SYDNEY -- World Champion Michael Doohan and Alex Criville crashed on the final lap of the Australian Grand Prix 500cc race Sunday gifting Loris Capirossi his first win of the season in the final race.

A stunned Capirossi accelerated his Yamaha to victory leaving Honda teammates Doohan, who scaled his third straight world title two weeks earlier, and Criville fuming at each other on the Eastern Creek Track.

Doohan had been staving off a Criville challenge when the Spaniard's front wheel hit Doohan's back tyre and both went flying out of contention.

The Australian World champion shook his fist at Criville, who had somersaulted over his handlebars and slammed hard onto the track surface.

Both riders got back on to their bikes though. Criville was sixth and Doohan eighth and neither was apparently harmed.

Doohan, the right shoulder of his leathers badly cut up in the fall, said: "He (Criville) was on the outside trying to come around me and I kept shutting the door for him.

"We had touched on turn two earlier in the last lap and then we touched big-time on turn nine.

"Where he touched me it didn't seem like he was close enough to being able to pass me.

"I don't know what was going through his mind, but again that typifies the way the racing's been going this year.

"It's alright when he's behind, but every time he does the overtaking pass on me, I generally come back on the inside of him and it's one thing getting out there in front and doing it by yourself."

Doohan said he want to shake his teammate's hand after the race.

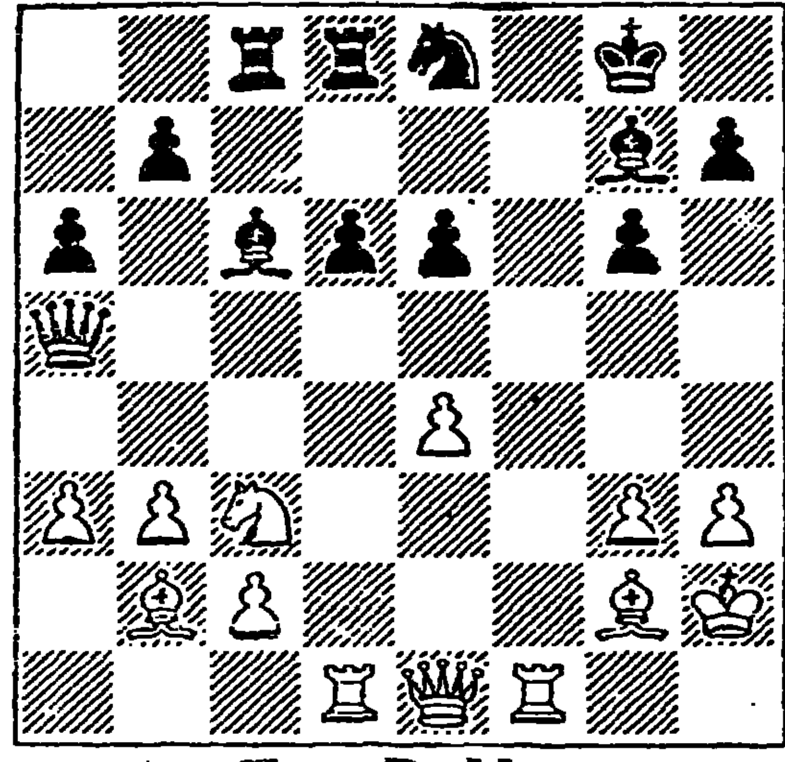
"I went to shake his hand after the race to say no hard feelings and he blamed me for supposedly cutting him out in turn two, so you tell me what happens?"

Capirossi, who had been third throughout until the drama, beat Japan's Tadayuki Okada on a Honda by 10.980sec with Spanish Honda rider Carlos Checa third.

It was a sour end for Doohan and Criville, who had dominated the 500cc season. Doohan was looking for his 35th victory from 106 Grand Prix starts, while Criville, who had won pole position, was bidding for his fifth GP triumph.

Aprilia rider Massimiliano Biaggi of Italy clinched his third straight world title with an emphatic victory in the 250cc race.

(AFP)

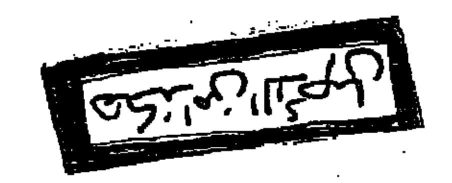


Chess Problems

Tehran Times Service

Problem No. 1

White Plays and Wins Solution: See Page 14.



Will the Accords Between Iran, African States Be Implemented?



JINJA, Uganda, (September 7): A group of local people listening to the speeches of Iranian President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani. During his three-day stay in Uganda, the Iranian president took part in various social circles. Construction a dam over Nile River, a water power plant, dredging the river bed from toxic plants, opening Iranian Embassy and... were among other issues the two sides agreed upon during the President Rafsanjani's visit.

(Contd from Pg. 1)

should be laid by Iran and the African states.

The foreign minister, who had accompanied President Rafsanjani on his recent visit to Africa and was well informed of the accords reached in the course of the six-nation tour, described the African market as 'virgin', adding that the Iranian people do not visualize Africa as it is in reality.

"The Iranian people associate Africa with hunger, famine, disease, backwardness, illiteracy, poverty and barbarism, while such assumptions cannot be generalized and are mostly exaggerated," Velayati said, adding that some African countries including South Africa have attained such a level of development and prosperity that are competing with countries in Western Europe.

The minister added that even some African countries that have not achieved considerable development possess so many God-given natural possibilities such as favorable climate, abundant mineral resources and strategic agricultural products that they are potentially rich. He cited the cheap work-force and the political will of the African states for development as other positive factors existing in those countries.

Regretting that so far those potentials have not been utilized to benefit the oppressed African people, Velayati expressed hope that, through the good offices of the Iranian people, the African nations will be able to benefit from their plentiful resources.

The foreign minister stressed that familiarizing the Iranian private sector with the real Africa can be achieved through conducting tours of the African countries, during which the Iranian businessmen will have an opportunity to closely evaluate the African industrial and commercial markets.

It is worth noting that promoting tourism and conducting tours have been among the agreements reached between Iran and the six African countries.

He added that the onus is also on the mass media, particularly the correspondents, to take effective measures to this end, informing the people of the realities in Africa through reports.

Velayati concluded by saying, "Fortunately, Iranians in Africa enjoy great backing, which is due to the Africans' positive attitude toward Iran's objectives sought through taking constructive measures in Africa. In other words, contrary to their lack of trust in the U.S. and its satellite states due to their plundering of the Africa's natural resources, the African states welcome the humanitarian goals pursued by Iran in the African countries."

It is worth noting that, in the course of his visit to the African states, the president always underlined in his addresses that Iran is not after economic benefits in Africa, but aims to transfer its experience in construction and development and extend aid to the oppressed African people.

Speaking with the *Tehran Times*, the commerce minister touched on the favorable conditions for the Iranian private sector in Africa and outlined the government facilities offered to those willing to make investments in Africa.

He said, "The Islamic Republic of Iran gives priority to relations with African states due to its ideological standpoint and possibilities. Even in the policies made for the country's second development plan, such priority has been taken into consideration."

He added, "Presently, some 90 percent of the needs of the African states can be met by Iran, among which are the technology for the construction of refineries, dams, silos, power plants, airports, roads, and the expertise for mechanized irrigation."

Ale-Es'haq considered the low tariffs, relative economic stability, cheap work-force and favorable climate as among the privileges enjoyed by those making investments in Africa. He said "In light of the negotiations held between Iran and the African states and the domestic regulations in those countries, the withdrawal of the capital and the accruing returns at the end of the investment term faces no legal barrier. Also, the Commerce Ministry guarantees the capital."

It is worth noting that President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, heading a high-ranking politico-economic delegation comprising some 200 Iranian officials, paid a visit to Kenya, Uganda, Sudan, Tanzania, Zimbabwe and South Africa from Sept. 2-15, during which some 30 agreements were reached.

In order to follow up the accords, a council called 'Africa Council' has been formed, which is chaired by President Rafsanjani. The official inauguration of the airline linking Tehran with the Uganda's capital, Kampala, at a ceremony attended by the two countries' officials on Oct. 17 was the first outcome of the President's visit to Africa.

Arab League: French FM's Boycott Is "Slap in Face" for Israel

CAIRO — The Arab League on Sunday praised French President Jacques Chirac over his decision to go to Israel without his foreign minister, saying the move was a "slap in the face" for the Zionist state.

Herve de Charette will not accompany Chirac to Israel on Monday in protest at Israeli opposition to a planned visit by the foreign minister to Orient House, unofficial headquarters of the Palestinian Authority in East Bait-ul-Moqaddas.

"The French president's decision not to be accompanied by De Charette during his Israel visit ... is a strong slap in the face for the Jewish state," said the Arab League's Deputy Secretary General Said Kamal.

Chirac arrived Saturday in Syria at the start of a regional tour which will also take him to Israel, the Palestinian territories, Jordan, Lebanon and Egypt.

(AFP)

(Contd from Pg. 1)

PRESIDENT...

come their president.

President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani arrived in this northwestern city Sunday to inaugurate 300 development and industrial projects.

A group of ministers and vice-presidents are accompanying President Rafsanjani in his inspection tour of the Ardebil Province.

Upon arrival at the airport, the president in a brief interview said that the aim of his two-day visit was to meet the people and inaugurate major projects.

(IRNA)

(Contd from Pg. 1)

LEBANON...

The committee — which groups representatives from the United States, France, Syria, Israel and Lebanon — has met seven times since August to discuss alleged violations of the April 26 truce accord.

In its latest ruling on Friday, it held Israel responsible for shelling a Lebanese village a week earlier and injuring 13 civilians but stopped short of condemning the Zionist state.

Under the April 26 agreement, which put an end to Israel's 17-day "Grapes of Wrath" operation against the Lebanon, both sides agreed to spare civilians and refrain from using civilian areas to launch attacks.

But as civilians continue to be a target, one foreign diplomat said the agreement "organizes fighting" by acting as a referee between Israel and Hezbollah in the Israeli-occupied border zone of Southern Lebanon rather than imposes a cease-fire.

Some 24 Lebanese civilians have been wounded in Israeli bombardments since April, including the 13 injured in the shelling of the village of Safad al-Battikh on October 11.

The incident prompted a complaint by Lebanon to the committee that met three times last week and carried out on-the-spot investigations to probe the alleged cease-fire violation.

In a final statement issued Friday, the committee said Israeli forces were responsible for the civilian casualties in Safad al-Battikh.

It said it "deplored" the injuries and urged that "appropriate measures be taken by responsible authorities to ensure that such tragedies will not be repeated."

The Lebanese Foreign Ministry said afterwards it was pleased with the ruling which it described as "objective."

However, the committee did not condemn Israel's action after the Zionist state's representative argued the panel was not a court and could not apportion blame. The final statement made reference to Israel's insistence that it had acted in a "proportionate and restrained manner" after coming under attack from Hezbollah.

(AFP)

(Contd from Pg. 1)

HAMAS...

Quoting Palestinian sources, the paper said the military wing's request insisted that Washington "should be punished through a practical formula" if Abu Marzuk is sent for trial in Israel.

Neither the paper nor the sources said what action the Hamas military brigade was contemplating, but its statement appeared to be a reference to attacks against American interests.

Abu Marzuk, 45, a businessman who has lived in the United States for 14 years, was arrested July 25 at Kennedy International Airport.

Abu Marzuk said Hamas is a mass movement composed of numerous separate cells that could not be controlled by a single leader.

Al-Hayat said the Hamas movement's highest body, the Shura Council, would meet soon to make a decision on the military wing's request and to "revaluate the group's strategy" toward the United States.

(AFP)

(Contd from Pg. 1)

CHIRAC...

ister Benjamin Netanyahu took office in June which culminated in last month's wave of violence that left 85 people dead.

"Together we must put the peace process back on the rails and enable it to succeed," he told Assad, whose own peace talks with Syria ground to a halt in February.

The French leader was given an exceptionally warm welcome at Damascus airport by Assad and thousands of cheering people waving French flags and pictures of the president, a sign of strong Arab support for a French and European role in the peace process.

The Syrian government daily *Teshrin* hailed Chirac's visit on Sunday, saying it "proved France and Europe were putting all their weight behind saving the process from the intransigeance of Israeli leaders."

However, both the United States and Israel are opposed to giving Europe a seat at the negotiating table — a point reiterated by Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy on Sunday.

"We cannot accept a mediator who would come into (the process) right in the Middle of the negotiations and the conflict," said Levy, adding that foreign intervention in the talks would "put a spanner in the works."

"Europe has an important role to play on the sidelines of the negotiations by encouraging the peace process on the economic level," Levy told Israeli radio.

Chirac's visit to Israel, which starts on Monday, promises to be tense after Paris announced that Foreign Minister Herve de Charette would not join the Israeli leg of the tour — a move seen as a protest to Israel's objections to a visit by the minister to Orient House, the Palestine Liberation Organization's unofficial headquarters in Bait-ul-Moqaddas.

However, French officials moved to quell anger in Israel over Chirac's decision not to make a speech to the Israeli Parliament by announcing the president had amended his schedule to allow a visit to the chamber.

Parliamentary speaker Dan Tichon had threatened to boycott Chirac's visit after the president turned down the Israeli invitation but promised to speak before the Palestinian Legislative Assembly.

Chirac said in his banquet speech there could be no lasting peace unless the aspirations of the Palestinians for self-determination and their own state, and the right of every side to security, were fulfilled.

"The principle of the exchange of territory for peace remains the basis of any agreement," Chirac said, citing both "the Syrian territory of the Golan" which was seized by Israel in 1967, and the case of Lebanon, which "must recover full sovereignty."

The southern part of Lebanon, where Hezbollah is active, is controlled by Israel, and some 35,000 Syrian troops are stationed in the rest of the country.

In his own speech Assad accused Netanyahu of torpedoing the peace process, and asked: "What interest have Syria and the other Arab countries in a peace which does not restore territory and rights."

He endorsed Chirac's call for a greater European role, but added that it should not clash with the efforts of the United States.

Chirac is to leave Syria on Monday, traveling onto Israel, the Palestinian territories, Jordan, Lebanon and Egypt.

(AFP)

(Contd from Pg. 1)

KDP...

After seizing Koysanjak, the hometown of PUK leader Jalal Talabani, on Friday, KDP fighters captured the town of Ranya on Saturday and were closing in on Sulaymaniyah from the west and north.

The fighting has fueled new fears of an exodus of refugees. A western aid official said 65 families fled Sulaymaniyah overnight Friday towards the Iranian border, fearing the fall of the city to the KDP.

The official Iranian news agency IRNA said PUK leaders had begun preparations to evacuate Sulaymaniyah, the second largest city in Iraqi Kurdistan.

IRNA also said the PUK has handed over territory under its control in northern Iraq to advancing KDP forces to "prevent further bloodshed."

British member of Parliament Emma Nicholson was in Iran to visit Iraqi Kurdish refugee camps and discuss sending aid amid warnings from Tehran of a "human catastrophe," IRNA added.

(AFP)

(Contd from Pg. 1)

DOSTAM...

A truck convoy of Dostam's troops was seen moving towards the city from the Salang pass to the north.

One group, made up of two tanks and two trucks, was seen taking up positions near Bagram Airbase, 50 kilometers (30 miles) north of Kabul, which Masood's troops captured late Friday.

However, the troops were taking no part in the fighting.

Dostam has signed a defensive alliance with deposed-President Rabbani and Masood together with the leader of the Hezb-i-Wahdat of Karim Khalili.

He has also held negotiations with a Taleban delegation under the auspices of Pakistan Interior Minister Naseerullah Babar.

On the desert to the northeast of Kabul the new road was defended by Taleban on the ridgeline that overlooks the Bagram plains and the military airbase that they lost.

Some of the Taleban claimed that they had launched a counter-attack against Bagram and had advanced to within two kilometers (1.2 miles) of the airbase, while others stated that no such attack was underway.

(AFP)

(Contd from Pg. 13)

Chess Problems..

Solution to Today's Problem

(No. 54)

1. Cd5	DXD
2. Ce7+	Rh8
3. Tf8+	Mate

WEATHER

The I.R. of Iran Meteorological Organization announced today's weather as follows:

Forecast for Tehran: Max. temp. 21°C Min. temp. 12°C

Clear to Partly Cloudy with dust

Warmest Point:
Omidieh 36°C

Coldest Point:
Khalkhal -3°C

Some cities of the worls

Cities	Max. °C	Cities	Max. °C
Riyadh	30	Vienna	15
Istanbul	16	Moscow	11
Rome	15	Madrid	–
Athens	21	Abu Dhabi	34
London	16	Karachi	35
Paris	15	New Delhi	–
Frankfurt	12	Kuwait	32

German Police Confirm Body Is Kidnapped Millionaire

FRANKFURT – A battered body found in woods near the western city of Wiesbaden was that of kidnapped German millionaire Jakub Fiszman, regional police confirmed Sunday.

An analysis carried out overnight of genetic samples taken from the body found by searchers on Saturday confirmed that it was Fiszman, a 40-year-old businessman, police said.

He died after suffering several blows struck with "considerable violence," said the regional police, or LKA.

Fiszman was abducted in Frankfurt on October 1 but was not released despite payment of a ransom of four million marks (2.6 million dollars) nine days later.

His body was found in the wooded region of the Taunus Mountains around Wiesbaden on Saturday after a massive three-day hunt by hundreds of police backed by dogs and Tornado jet fighters equipped with heat-seeking equipment.

Sniffer dogs found Fiszman lying face down near a spot where one of the suspects, Sven Koerppen, told police he and his father had taken Fiszman. The two were arrested on Wednesday.

An inquiry has been launched into the exact cause and time of death, the LKA said.

Fiszman, a businessman who inherited a real-estate fortune put at 400 million marks (260 million dollars), was dragged from his car outside the Frankfurt offices of the family firm on October 1.

The last sign of life from him was on October 2.

The four million marks paid by the Fiszman family was delivered to the kidnappers by the victim's brother Georg on October 10, but Fiszman failed to reappear.

(AFP)

Lithuanians Head for Polls to Elect New Parliament

VILNIUS – Lithuanian voters headed for the polls Sunday to elect a new Parliament with the rightist opposition well-placed to defeat former communists who have controlled the chamber since 1992.

Polling stations opened at 8:00 a.m. (0500 GMT) and were to close at 10:00 p.m. (1900 GMT).

Some 2.6 million voters were due to choose between the 1,351 candidates from 24 parties and political groups vying for the 111 seats in the Lithuanian Parliament, the Seimas.

The principal parties in the election to the Lithuanian Parliament are the former communist Democratic Labour Party, which has been in power since 1992, and the rightist opposition represented by Christian Democrats and the Fatherland Union of former independence leader Vitautas Landsbergis.

Several opinion polls give the opposition a lead over the former communists. Rightists parties have promised to speed up economic and political reform if they are victorious.

The first results will not be known until Monday afternoon. More than 50 percent of the electorate must vote for the ballot to be valid.

(AFP)

Nicaraguan Vote Opens With Downpour Expected to Hurt Turnout

MANAGUA – Heavy rains were expected to hurt turnout Sunday in Nicaragua's presidential race pitting conservative coffee grower Arnoldo Aleman against Daniel Ortega, a former leftist rebel and ex-president.

Polls opened at 7:00 a.m. (1300 GMT) with no incidents immediately reported.

Despite conciliatory rhetoric from the top candidates, both Ortega's supporters and those of rightist Aleman of the Liberal Alliance fear that if their candidate doesn't win, old scores might be settled with violence.

Belgians in Silent Protest Over Child Sex Scandal

BRUSSELS – Hundreds of thousands of people marched through Brussels Sunday in a silent protest at the Belgian justice system's handling of the horrific child sex, kidnapping and murder case that has shocked the nation for the past three months.

Police said about 275,000 demonstrators joined the march – far more than expected – many of whom carried white flowers and balloons in memory of the victims of a suspected pedophil network and all missing children.

The procession began at 1:30 p.m. (1130 GMT), half an hour earlier than scheduled, and was divided into two columns because of the crush of people.

The signal to begin the march was given by the parents of some of the children found dead on properties belonging to convicted child rapist Marc Dutroux, who is suspected of masterminding an international child sex ring.

"You are the warmth of our country," Pol Marchal, father of the murdered An Marchal, told a crowd of around 30,000 people gathered on the place Rogier outside the main railway station.

Jean-Denis Lejeune, father of eight-year-old Julie whose body was found at one of Dutroux's homes, told the protesters: "I have just received a message from Julie: She is very proud of you."

The crowd applauded as Nabela Benaissa, sister of another missing girl, Loubna Benaissa, told them: "We had a little bird who was nine and a half and who has left the nest, and since then we have been waiting for her."

Several other children spoke briefly to express their solidarity with the families of missing children, each of them drawing applause.

Organizers had been expecting between 100,000 and 200,000 at the march, which climaxes a week of protests and wildcat strikes reflecting public outrage at perceived bungling and a possible cover-up in the investigation of Dutroux, who has been charged with kidnapping six children and murdering an alleged accomplice.

Anger spilled over when the country's highest court ruled Monday that popular examining Magistrate Jean-Marc Connerotte be taken off the case after Dutroux's lawyers successfully argued that he had compromised his position by attending a benefit dinner for victims' families.

Prime Minister Jean-Luc Dehaene, whose public image suffered after he failed to cancel his Italian holidays when the first macabre discoveries in the Dutroux case were made, met with the families of the victims on Sunday

(AFP)

Voting Steady in Albania Local Poll

TIRANA – Voting proceeded steadily and without incident Sunday in Albanian local elections seen as an important test of the country's fledgling democracy after flawed legislative elections earlier this year.

The Central Election Committee announced that 40 percent of the electorate had voted by 1:00 p.m. (1100 GMT), and that no incidents had been reported.

The poll comes five months after the international community slammed the Albanian authorities for irregularities in parliamentary elections.

Polling booths opened at 8 a.m. (0600 GMT) and more than two million voters are expected to choose between candidates put forward by 25 parties before they close at 9:00 p.m. (1900 GMT).

President Sali Berisha's Democratic Party (PD) and the opposition Socialist Party (PS), dominated by former communists, are expected to garner most of the seats.

Berisha and his wife Liri voted mid-morning in a polling booth near their home in the capital Tirana.

He appealed to Albanians to "vote freely to chose the best candidates ... and to thereby contribute to the dignity of Albania."

Major opposition parties, led by the PS, withdrew from legislative elections in May after the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) confirmed irregularities in the vote.

This time the Council of Europe is monitoring the elections and the U.S. Congress and several European governments have also sent observers.

The OSCE's parliamentary assembly said Thursday it would not monitor the elections after Tirana refused to accept the number of observers which the OSCE's specialist body, the office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, had planned to send.

(AFP)

Rain Swamps U.S. Northeast, Forces Evacuations

NEW YORK – Heavy rains in New York and New Jersey forced evacuations, closed major bridges and highways and left more than 100,000 homes without electricity on Saturday, officials said.

Although much of the northeastern United States endured a wet Saturday, rain was particularly heavy in those two states, said weather officials.

"The storm came from nowhere," said Joe Goudsward, a meteorologist with the national weather service. "It actually formed on top of the New York City area. The biggest problem was there was nothing to push it along – it hasn't moved all day. It's now beginning to push into Connecticut."

The area around Gillette, New Jersey, had 8 inches (20 cm) of rain and in New York, 4.22 inches (10.7 cm) were measured at Central Park and 4.07 inches (10.3 cm) at Laguardia Airport.

Airport officials closed La Guardia until at least noon on Sunday after a Delta plane skidded off a wet runway when its landing gear collapsed. All passengers were evacuated and four minor injuries were reported because of the incident.

City officials closed the Triborough bridge – which connects Manhattan, the Bronx and Queens – portions of the FDR drive along the East River, the northern state parkway in Nassau County, and the belt parkway between Queens and Brooklyn because of flooding.

More than 100,000 homes in Long Island, Westchester, New Jersey and New York City were without electricity, said area utility officials.

Heather Ringwalt, a spokeswoman for the New York chapter of the Red Cross, said the organization had opened 20 evacuation centers in New York City and Nassau County, where 300 people had already gathered from inundated homes.

(Reuter)

Heavy Rains Kill 51 in India, Thousands Homeless

NEW DELHI – At least 51 people have been killed and thousands left homeless in southern India after heavy rains sparked flash floods, domestic news agencies said Sunday.

Weather officials forecast the rain would continue for at least another two days.

Forty-one of the deaths occurred in the worst-hit coastal state of Andhra Pradesh, where army helicopters dropped food packets to those marooned in flooded villages, the Press Trust of India (PTI) said.

Life boats were also used to rescue trapped villagers.

Rail and road transport were seriously affected across Andhra Pradesh and the nearby state of Tamil Nadu, where 10 people died. Most victims were drowned.

Nearly 50,000 people, mainly the poor, were evacuated by authorities after rain-swollen rivers swamped scores of villages in Andhra Pradesh, *The Hindu* newspaper said.

Hundreds of houses and buildings as well as crops were damaged in the two states, where several rivers were in spate.

(AFP)

Hardline Khmer Rouge Preparing for Cambodian Government Attack

SISOPHON, Cambodia – The hardline Khmer Rouge leadership has sent up to 700 of its most battle-hardened guerrillas to guard the frontline of its headquarters in preparation for a massive attack by government troops, a recent defector said Sunday.

Chea Vuthy, a former battalion commander stationed near the headquarters of Anlong Veng in northern Cambodia, said the hardliners had "collected all their remaining forces" from the central and northeastern provinces to protect the rase "in case the government tries to attack them during the dry season".

"The situation in Anlong Veng right now is unstable," said Chea Vuthy, 29, who was sent out from the area last week to spy on government troop movements but instead defected.

He added that a British mine clearance expert, abducted by the Khmer Rouge in March and feared dead since the guerrilla movement split in August, was alive in Anlong Veng as of 10 days ago and was assisting the hardliners in defending the area.

Similar reports of Christopher Howes' activities in captivity have been denied by both his employer, the mines advisory group and the British Foreign Office. Neither could be immediately reached for comment.

(AFP)

Jet Skids Off New York Runway

NEW YORK – A Delta Air Lines plane skidded to the end of a runway at New York's Laguardia Airport while landing in heavy rain, officials said Saturday.

Five people received minor injuries when they slid down the plane's emergency chutes, the port authority of New York and New Jersey told AFP. One person was hospitalized.

(Contd from Pg. 4)

WEMEN...

"Her Lord Accepted her with full acceptance and vouchsafes to her a goodly growth... (3:37)

There are many people that only their efforts, not themselves, are accepted them all and gives them refuge: "Allah accepts only from those who ward off (evil). (5:27)

To accept an act is other than to accept the essential nature of the doer of the act. Allah accepted Mary and did not say that He accepted the act. And Mary's mother in the temple sought refuge in Allah, the Beneficent for her child and He accepted her prayer. Those acquainted with the Qoranic knowledge give due and exact explanation of what Mary's mother said, but those in abysmal ignorance of this transcendental knowledge explain it otherwise.

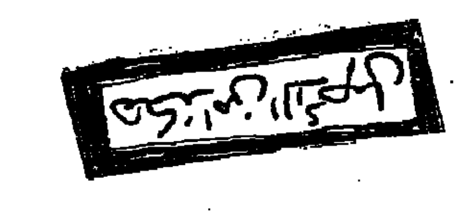
Simile in the Words of Mary's Mother

About the birth of Mary (AS), the Qoran says: "And when she was delivered, she said: 'My Lord! Lo! I delivered a female - Allah knew best of what she was to deliver - the male is not as the female; and Lo! I have named her Mary, and Lo! I crave your protection for her and for her offspring from Satan the outcast." (3:36)

As to the interpretation of the phrase "the male is not as the female" - there are tow groups:

The first group considers the simile as an indirect one to the effect that since male is better than female and male is superior to female, then if 'someone says, "male is not like female," it should be taken the other way around, i.e. "female is not like male".

The second group maintains that the simile in the Qoranic verse is direct not indirect, to the effect that never can a son play the role of his daughter, and no man has the eligibility to be the father of Jesus (AS).



هكذا من الكحل

Connecticut Man's Tardiness Costs Him $5.8m

BOSTON -- If only he had come forward just three days earlier, Clarence Jackson could have claimed a multi-million dollar fortune.

Jackson, 23, of New Haven, Connecticut, bought the winning ticket to the Friday, October 13, 1995, state lottery worth $5.8 million.

He showed up at a lottery office on Wednesday, October 16, 1996, to claim the prize -- three days too late.

Connecticut state lottery rules say the claimant must come forward within one year of the date of the draw. (Reuter)

Boy Jumps to Death to Escape Monkeys

NEW DELHI -- A 12-year-old boy jumped to his death from the terrace of a two-storey house here after he was attacked by seven monkeys, the police said Sunday.

The victim, identified as Kalu, was seriously injured after the fall at Khari Boli district on Saturday and died in hospital. The boy was sleeping when he was attacked.

The Hindustan Times newspaper quoted residents as saying monkeys had spread terror in Khari Boli region "and people are afraid to come out of their houses." (AFP)

Hashimoto's Party Does Well in Election, Exit Poll Says

TOKYO -- Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto's Conservative Party won the most seats in Japan's parliamentary election Sunday but may fall just short of a majority, according to two exit polls.

The polls indicated Hashimoto was virtually assured of reelection, but his Liberal Democratic Party will probably have to remain in a coalition government as it has for the past 2 1/2 years.

Hashimoto promised during the 12-day campaign to overhaul Japan's bureaucracy, which holds most of the nation's power, by cutting the number of ministries in half, and to eliminate a morass of regulations that businesses say inhibit growth.

But it is unclear whether the prime minister, who has close ties to the career bureaucrats, will carry out those promises during a second term, and many voters were skeptical as well.

A poll of 310,000 voters by the public Japan Broadcasting Corp., or NHK, showed Hashimoto's Liberal Democratic Party winning between 232 and 254 of the 500 seats in Parliament's powerful Lower House, which selects the prime minister.

Fuji Television's exit poll showed the LDP won 241 seats.

The findings mirrored earlier polls during the campaign, which predicted the Liberal Democrats would win about half the seats.

Early official results and projections based on them also showed the Liberal Democrats were doing well. And Hashimoto won his own district, NHK said, erasing earlier fears that he was in for a tough fight. (AP)

Pope Appears on Vatican Balcony for Prayers

ROME -- Pope John Paul II appeared at his balcony at the Vatican for the traditional Angelus prayer service on Sunday, his first public appearance since his release from hospital five days ago.

The Pope, 76, who appeared in good health as he prepared to address a large crowd in Saint Peter's Square, underwent an operation to remove his appendix a week ago.

He had returned to work on Wednesday the day after returning to the Vatican from the Gemelli Clinic in Rome.

Doctors say the operation was a success and turned up no evidence of any other disease or a recurrence of the colon tumor the Pope had removed in 1992. (AFP)

Lukashenko Assembly Urges Parliament to Cancel Its Referendum



MINSK, Belarus (Oct. 19): An old Babushka and police officers follow the action as opposition supporters confront riot police while thousands of people gather in central Minsk to protest efforts by Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko to push through a new constitution which would dramatically increase his powers. (AFP PHOTO)

MINSK -- An unelected assembly convened by Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko called Sunday on the republic's Parliament to withdraw its plans for a referendum on abolishing the post of presidency.

The 6,000 delegates brought together by Lukashenko in a bid to end the power spat crippling the former Soviet Republic urged the Belarus Parliament to cancel its referendum on a new constitution, planned for November 24.

Lukashenko and Parliament have been locked in a power feud for weeks over the two referendums.

Lukashenko's referendum would greatly increase his powers at the expense of Parliament, while the Parliament's poll would abolish the position of president.

On Saturday, Lukashenko said he would delay his own referendum so that it would also be held on November 24, something demanded by the Parliament.

The development appeared to set up a day when voters would be asked to choose between president and Parliament in the power struggle.

But on Sunday the Lukashenko assembly, convened by the president to secure support for his constitutional plans, condemned the parliamentary referendum plan.

"The assembly calls on Parliament to cancel from its referendum the questions ... concerning a draft constitution which abolishes the post of president," said a resolution adopted by all but 11 of the 6,000 delegates. (AFP)

Catholics, Protestants Clash at Soccer Game

BELFAST, Northern Ireland -- A stone-throwing mob attacked Belfast Catholic soccer fans Saturday as they arrived in the largely Protestant town of Portadown to attend a game.

Visiting fans of Cliftonville, the Belfast team, ripped up seats from their buses to use as shields against stones, bottles and other missiles when they were ambushed just before the start of the game at Portadown's Shamrock Park, 25 miles (40 km) southwest of Belfast.

Catholic players' families, including children as young as 4, were caught up in the attack, apparently carried out by hardline pro-British Protestant protesters. One of the buses was badly damaged.

"There was sheer hate in their faces," said Cliftonville fan Liam Murray. "I've never seen hate like it in my life. It was unbelievable." (AP)

Sri Lanka Mounts Anti-Tiger Offensive

COLOMBO -- Security forces bombed a key Tamil Tiger base in northern Sri Lanka as rebels elsewhere torched a wildlife bungalow and tried to sabotage a telephone exchange, officials said Sunday.

The air force bombed the "Sea Tiger" bases of the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in the coastal Chundikkulam bird sanctuary region over the weekend, officials said.

There said damage to the guerrillas' facilities was believed to be high but no details were immediately known.

The long-range attacks came as police shot dead a Tamil Tiger guerrilla who was about to bomb a key telephone exchange in northeastern Sri Lanka, local officials said.

Sentries opened fire when two members of the LTTE approached the new 200-line telephone exchange at Kinniya in the Trincomalee district on Saturday.

"One Tiger was killed and his body was recovered by the police together with explosives he was carrying to blow up the exchange," said an official in Trincomalee, 257 kilometres (160 miles) northeast of here.

Two days earlier, a policeman was killed while defending another telephone exchange in the same district, officials said adding that the Tigers had stepped up attacks against basic infrastructure in the region.

The Defense Ministry said a total of three rebels and a soldier were killed in three other clashes in the island's northeast Saturday. (AFP)

Finland's 4.1 Million Voters Go to Polls

HELSINKI -- Finnish voters headed to the polls on Sunday in misty and foggy weather in the country's first European Union (EU) elections and in local elections.

A total of 4.1 million Finns are eligible, as well as about 2,500 citizens of other EU countries, to vote in Euro-elections and some 45,000 EU citizens and Scandinavians in the local elections.

The booths were opened at 9:00 a.m. (0600 GMT) and was to be closed at 8:00 p.m. (1700 GMT).

In all, 208 deputies from 15 political parties and electoral alliances are vying for the 16 seats in the Strasbourg Parliament.

According to the latest polls, the two main parties in the right-left coalition government, the Social Democrats and the Conservatives, as well as the main opposition party, the Center Party, will win most of the seats. (AFP)

More Than 100,000 Refugees Flee Camps in Eastern Zaire

BUJUMBURA, Burundi -- More than 100,000 Burundian and Rwandan refugees have fled their camps in southeastern Zaire because of fighting nearby, a UN spokesman said Sunday.

"It could very quickly turn into an emergency," UN High Commissioner for Refugees Spokesman Paul Stromberg said. "We don't even have access to them at this point, so right now there is no question of resettling them."

Ibrahima Fall, special envoy of UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, was in the region Sunday to assess the situation.

Stromberg said the Zairian military has reported that four refugee camps for 110,000 Burundian and Rwandan Hutus have been abandoned because of fighting between Zairian troops and Banyamulenge rebels in and around the camps.

There have been no reports of casualties and independent confirmation of the Zairian army reports was impossible since aid workers and journalists are not allowed into the area.

The minority Banyamulenge, a sub-group of Tutsi, have lived in Zaire for generations, but with the arrival of Hutu refugees from Burundi and Rwanda the group has been subject to violent attacks by local militias and discrimination by the Zairian government.

Some Banyamulenge have taken up arms against the Zairian military and have reportedly received assistance from the Tutsi-dominated armies in Burundi and Rwanda. (AP)



BANJA LUKA, Bosnia-Herzegovina (Oct. 19): Muslim delegates of Bosnian Serb Republic Parliament raise their votes to oppose the election of the Parliament vice president during the first Parliament session after elections in Bosnia in Banja Luka. The Parliament elected Dragan Kalinic unanimously as the speaker of the Parliament to replace Momcilo Krajisnik. Muslim deputies then left the chamber as their Serb colleagues took the oath of office. (AFP PHOTO)

Singapore Bourse Locked in a Bear Hug Amid Economic Worries

SINGAPORE — Worries over a slowing economy have cast a pall over the Singapore Stock Market, prompting economists to pare down corporate earnings forecasts and foreign investors to give the bourse a wide berth.

Analysts see no signs of a rebound any time soon on the moribund market, whose Benchmark Index has shed 17.2 percent from its February peak, despite measures unveiled by the government last week to boost the capital market.

"We have moved from being cautiously optimistic to being cautious," Merrily Chiam, Director of Research at Nomura Research Institute, said of NRI's market stance after a disappointing interim results-reporting season.

"Essentially we will need to see some strong trade figures before we see more confidence in the market. All eyes therefore will be on the October trade figures," said Chiam.

She added that September trade data due out Monday were expected to show negative growth. In August, crucial non-oil exports dipped 6.3 percent and manufacturing output fell 7.6 percent.

After a strong start to the year, the stock market has been hit by a barrage of bad news.

Government measures unveiled in mid-may to curb property speculation, wall street volatility and jitters over the direction of us interest rates combined with a succession of poor economic numbers to dampen investor sentiment.

The benchmark straits times industrials index has slid 17.2 percent from its February 6 peak of 2,493.6, closing Friday at 2,064.52, after sinking below the psychologically important 2,100 level without resistance.

Market turnover for the first three quarters of the year has plunged to 23.1 billion shares worth 63.4 billion Singapore dollars (45.28 billion us), 23 percent down in volume and 11 percent down in value from the corresponding period of 1995.

"It has been downhill all the way since mid-May," said Chan Tuck Sing, Dealing Director of OUB Securities.

"Investors want to see growth, not where we have one revision after another downwards," he added.

Recent initial public offerings have drawn a mixed response with the notable exception of regional cafe-bakery chain DeliFrance Asia Ltd., whose offer was 4.5 times oversubscribed.

Contract manufacturer Natsteel Broadway and Hong Kong-based garment exporter easyknit international were undersubscribed. They closed below offer price in disappointing debuts as did Hong Kong-based seafood supplier Pacific Andes.

Most investment houses have scaled down forecasts of corporate earnings growth after weaker-than-expected interim results, said Chiam of Nomura, which slashed its estimate to 11.4 percent from 16.6 percent.

Last week, the government said it would allow foreign firms to list and trade shares in Singapore dollars instead of U.S. dollars and unveiled a new regional index. A unit trust run by six local banks will invest in its component stocks.

The settlement period of share transactions will be shortened by two days to three from early 1997 to improve the cash flows of investors and brokers.

For now, however, "there is no strong reason" to bring foreign investors back into the market, said Chen Young Mee, Deputy Director for Research at Vickers Ballas Investment House.

"Fund managers are looking at Malaysia or Hong Kong rather than Singapore," she said. "They may look here when there are signs that an improvement is underway in the economy, not in the near-term."

Chan of OUB Securities said he expected the market to react to economic numbers only 'if there is a surprise one way or the other.'

He added on a more upbeat note that "at some point of time, we should see the return of foreign institutional money."

"If there is a correction on Wall Street, money might move to some safe haven and we fit the bill. If Wall Street keeps going up, we could become cheaper and cheaper and foreign funds could still come in." (AFP)

Xerox Profits Disappoint, Send Stock Plunging

NEW YORK -- Xerox Corp. stunned Wall Street by reporting its third-quarter profits got jammed on slack sales of black-and-white copiers. The news sent the company's stock plunging nearly 15 percent.

America's largest copier company on Friday blamed unexpectedly slow sales in overseas markets, particularly in Brazil and Europe, despite an unusually steep investment to sell the copiers.

Xerox earned dlrs 250 million, or 71 cents per share, in the three months ended sept. 30, compared with dlrs 236 million, or 68 cents per share, a year ago when it had a dlrs 20 million write-off for its insurance unit.

Without the write-off a year ago, Xerox's profits would have dropped 2 percent during the most recent quarter. The company had revenues of dlrs 4.16 billion in the quarter, up about 4 percent from dlrs 4.01 billion.

The results contrasted with expectations by analysts for an 82-cents per share profit, according to a survey by first call Inc.

Xerox stock dropped more than 20 percent at its low point during the day, then recovered a bit to end down dlrs 8.25 a share at dlrs 48.75. it was the most heavily traded issue on the New York Stock Exchange.

"I am disappointed in the results this quarter," said Xerox Chairman Paul A. Allaire. "Our investments in sales coverage and promotion did not yield the results we expected in the quarter."

Black-and-white copier revenues, which make up more than half the company's sales, fell 4 percent amid competitive pressures to cut prices and tough economies that hurt sales in Europe and Brazil.

Compounding the slow revenue gains, the company spent 8 percent more on research and development and 10 percent more on selling the copiers amid higher spending for advertising and marketing.

Xerox hopes to improve its outlook by refocusing its main business to so-called digital copiers. These machines scan documents and then translate them into computer code to reproduce copies more clearly, faster and in color. Traditional copiers photograph documents.

In the first nine months of the year the company earned dlrs 780 million, or dlrs 2.24 per share, on revenues of dlrs 12.3 billion. A year earlier the company earned dlrs 621 million, or dlrs 1.78 per share, on revenues of dlrs 11.8 billion. (AP)

Thailand Boosts Domestic Tourism

BANGKOK — With foreign tourists deserting Thailand for newer destinations in the region, the country's tourism board is pushing domestic travel for Thais as a means to halt the slide in the current account deficit.

Official figures show a steady rise in tourist arrivals, but they do not show that foreigners are increasingly cutting back their visits, sometimes to brief stopovers, before taking their foreign exchange elsewhere.

Foreign tourists spent 190.8 billion baht (7.6 billion dollars) in Thailand in 1995, while Thai travellers spent 148.1 billion baht (5.9 billion dollars) inside the country during the same year.

Some 1.8 million Thais travelling abroad, however, spent 83 billion baht (3.3 billion dollars), contributing to a persistent current account deficit projected to total 7.8-8.0 percent of gross domestic product this year.

"Tourism has been the biggest money-earner since 1982, and foreign currency earnings can help bring down the current account deficit," said Seree Wangpaichitr, Governor of the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT).

In March, the customs department announced it was slashing the duty-free exemption of returning thai tourists to 5,000 baht (200 dollars) after authorities blamed affluent thai travellers shopping for luxury goods abroad for part of the 335.7 billion baht current account deficit in 1995.

The move triggered howls of protest and the exemption was raised to 10,000 baht, but authorities remained determined to bring the situation under control.

Seree said that a "Thais visit Thailand" program started two years ago has already begun to bear fruit, although there was room for improvement.

A survey of 29 popular tourist spots across the country found a 21 percent increase in domestic visitors last year, he said.

Travel agents suggested that package tours, providing good value for relatively little money, would be an important factor in getting more thais to travel in their own country.

A representative of Andaman Princess, which organizes short cruises in Thai waters, said that cut-price packages had boosted the number of Thai clients by 50 percent in the past two to three years.

"There is a lot of competition among travel agents in package tours. Cut-price packages and well-trained guides are important elements," she said.

The TAT governor warned that competition for tourists in the region had reached a "serious" level. "Both the government and the private sector have to cooperate and help each other before we face a crisis," Seree said.

Seree stressed the need for greater cooperation between airlines, private tourism organizations and the government on travel facilities and room rates, and he called for more follow-through on projects.

He also urged authorities to tackle issues such as tourist safety as reports of robberies, assaults and fraud against tourists discouraged would-be visitors.

Sumalee Chaitientong, public relations manager of Bangkok Airways, a domestic airline, confirmed that foreign tourists were turning to other countries in the region, with neighbors Burma and Cambodia favorite spots now.

"European tourists are interested in Burma, Laos and Vietnam because they are new countries for tourism," Sumalee said.

Replacing the disappearing Europeans are tourists from the booming economies of the Asia-Pacific region, with Japan a top target of travel agents in Southeast Asia.

"Japan's economic situation is still better than that of many countries in Europe and the yen is strong," Sumalee said.

Malaysians are the most frequent visitors to Thailand, but they travel mainly across their northern border to Thailand's southern provinces.

Japanese tourists were in second place last year and in the first six months of 1996, followed by three other Asian nations.

Germany is the European country sending the most visitors to Thailand, while U.S. visitors rank ninth. (AFP)

APEC Affirms Willingness to Accept New Members

MANILA, Philippines -- Officials of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum appeared ready to end a moratorium on new members by agreeing Saturday to focus instead on criteria for accepting applicants.

APEC decided in November 1993 to impose a three-year membership moratorium, fearing that a deluge of new members would interfere with the group's progress toward a goal of free trade by 2020.

But sentiment has shifted this year as each country has advanced in preparing voluntary plans for liberalizing trade. APEC senior officials, meeting Saturday in Manila, stressed the importance of keeping the organization open.

The issue now is not whether to extend the moratorium, but "When to accept new members," said Philippine Ambassador Antonio Basilio, deputy chair of the senior officials' meeting.

He said there was already a broad consensus that criteria for membership should include geographic location, economic involvement with APEC, and commitment to the organization's philosophy.

A decision on the moratorium must be made by APEC leaders when they meet next month in the philippines in the annual APEC summit.

Whether new members will be accepted in November or later "is something the senior officials are pondering," Basilio said.

With the recent addition of Ecuador, 11 nations have said they want to join the 18-member group.

The others are Colombia, India, Macau, Mongolia, Pakistan, Panama, Peru, Russia, Sri Lanka and Vietnam.

In their meetings Saturday, the senior Asian RIM officials also responded positively to a U.S.-proposed plan to slash worldwide tariffs on computers, software, telecommunications and other products to zero by 2000, officials said.

The United States is seeking apec support for the plan, called the information technology agreement, which it has submitted to the World Trade Organization.

According to U.S. estimates, such goods account for hundreds of billions of dollars of trade in the Asia-Pacific region each year.

Although many Asian countries are strong in some of products, several still feel they need to protect fledging domestic industries in other areas and are reluctant to slash tariffs immediately.

"While we all agree in the long term ... that everyone will win, in the short term there will be costs," Basilio said. We may need to look at the phasing in of tariff reductions."

U.S. APEC Coordinator John Wolf said there was "a lot of progress on the ITA," with discussions of what products should be included in the plan scheduled in Geneva on Oct. 28.

"I think people are beginning to realize that the bridge to the 21st century has an ita agreement written on it," he said.

U.S. officials say the tariff reductions would affect 50 percent of all U.S. trade with Asia and dlrs 72 billion in American imports.

APEC's current members are Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand and the United States. (AP)

Sudan to Open Conference on Rescuing Crumbling Economy

KHARTOUM -- Hundreds of economists will meet in Sudan on Monday to find ways to rescue an economy that is making life more miserable in a country already one of Africa's poorest.

The conference is the second such meeting since the Islamic fundamentalist government seized power in a coup in 1989. It is expected to draw 600 Sudanese and foreign experts.

"This conference has to come up with recommendations that will lead the state in its future plans and programs," said Babiker al-Toum, a member of parliament helping direct the meeting.

The decision to convene the conference is a sign of the government's concern for an ailing economy. A reduction in subsidies and rising inflation has led to workers' protests, and the 13-year civil war has added further strain.

The price of the sudanese pound has fallen from 838 to the dollar to 1,421 over the past year.

Toum told Sudanese Radio that among the topics at the three-day conference will be economic reform and investment, increasing productivity and combating inflation.

The first conference, convened in 1989, recommended a free market economy, a reduction in subsidies and the privatization of state-owned companies - all proposals the government has undertaken to varying degrees of success. (AP)

French Central Banker Sees an "Economic Government of Europe"

PARIS -- Bank of France Governor Jean-Claude Trichet said Saturday that a proposed informal stability council to monitor the single European currency would act as an 'Economic Government of Europe'.

"There is a strong French desire, and an agreement with the Germans and other partners, for an inform... ...bility council grouping only the governments in the Euro Zone (those that adopt the single currency)," Trichet said in a speech in Paris.

Trichet said the council would allow the coordination of budget policy, but its role could be extended to all economic policies, particularly revenue-raising and structural reform, to become the heart of an 'Economic Government'. (AFP)

National Assembly Winds Up Debate

PARIS — The National Assembly on Saturday wound up debate on France's 1997 budget, anticipating a government deficit of 284.303 billion francs (54.56 billion dollars).

That is 600 million francs down from the total forecast deficit put forth by Prime Minister Alain Juppe's government when lawmakers began to discuss the coming year's revenues.

But it is still above the public-deficit threshold for joining the single European currency in January 1999 — a French Government priority — set at three percent of gross domestic product.

The National Assembly is to vote on the proposed budget on Tuesday, after which the senate begins its debate.

Earlier the government gave its committment that it would act 'as soon as possible' to withdraw a provisional two point increase in France's value added (sales) tax to 20.6 percent, implemented last year. (AFP)



Giant of the Deep Remains Mystery to Scientists

"If we don't know anything about a flagship species like the basking shark, what chance is there of protecting smaller fish which might be equally deserving attention?"

ISLE OF ARRAN, Scotland — The basking shark is the second largest fish in the sea, it is found in most oceans of the world except the tropics — yet scientists know almost nothing about it.

"If we don't know anything about a flagship species like the basking shark, what chance is there of protecting smaller fish which might be equally deserving attention?" says Dr. Mark O'Connell, an environmental scientist from Durham University's Department of Biological Sciences.

The basking shark, which can grow up to 10 meters (33 feet) long and weigh about three tons, is one of 30 shark species found off Western Europe and seeing one is an experience not easily forgotten. The shoal rises to just below the surface and apparently basks in the sun.

Nobody knows why.

"Fish are influenced by changes in temperature. It could be that they come to the surface to warm themselves up before a deep dive," said O'Connell's partner Dr. Tim Thom.

Together they have been establishing a research project on the huge fish off the Scottish Island of Arran.

Only its close relative the whale shark, found in tropical waters, is bigger. The great white shark which terrorized the beaches in Steven Spielberg's "Jaws" is nowhere near as large.

But unlike the great white or the even more ferocious bull shark the basking shark is unresearched, harmless and survives on plankton, "the grass of the ocean", according to O'Connell.

What the researchers are coming to understand is that while the fish might be under no threat, there are fewer of them.

Officially there is no decline in the population. "You go to official bodies and say 'their numbers are declining' and they say 'where is your evidence?' and you have to admit there isn't any," said O'Connell.

Most of the evidence is flimsily anecdotal.

"Many, many people have told us of shoals of 20 or 30 fish a few years ago. Now they talk of four or five and this has happened countless times," said Thom.

The basking shark is fished commercially which could be a factor in their declining numbers. The European Union (EU) allows a quota of 200 tons of basking shark liver to be taken annually and the Norwegian fleet is the major hunter in Europe.

Some time ago heavy fishing of the sharks took place off the coast of county Mayo in the Irish Republic. No basking sharks have been seen there for years.

As nobody knows how long the sharks live, how often they breed or even how they breed, the impact of fishing cannot be measured and it might be years before the effect is felt.

"Estimates of the basking shark's gestation period vary from six months to three years. Take your pick," said O'Connell.

Since records began in 1981, and for centuries before that, according to local memory, the sharks would appear in the Kilbrannan sound between Arran and the Kintyre Peninsula in mid May and remain until late September.

This year the first sighting was not until July and judging by the dearth of sightings since early September, they have slipped back into the Atlantic Ocean early too.

"According to the records there has never been a gap of 18 days between sightings until this year," said Thom.

The work which O'Connell, Thom and their helpers have begun is basic and strangled by lack of funding.

Current funding barely covers costs and doesn't pay mortgages.

Both scientists have had to put aside other work to make a start on the shark project.

Observation is as far as it has gone so far. Or it would be if the sharks cooperated. Even so the team has developed its procedures so that further work can go ahead efficiently.

Technology can add to the information considerably, but a sighting remains the starting point.

Thom and O'Connell drift off the coast with their equipment in a high powered rubber launch sweeping the still waters of the sound. Onshore a string of observers armed with signal flags scan the narrow stretch of sea.

The plan is that when a shark is sighted, the boat will race to it and the researchers will try to attach an electronic tag to its dorsal fin.

The tag is "state of the art" but not what they would have if they had the money to design one from scratch.

What it will do is record depth and water temperature, and when the fish surfaces, location, and transmit the data for about a year via satellite to a computer in Paris from which the information can be accessed via the Internet.

"There are many theories about the basking shark but nobody really knows. I favor the theory of vast migrations," said Thom.

That could mean enormous distances — huge fish swimming endlessly across oceans from Europe to Newfoundland and down the U.S. Eastern Seaboard.

The research is costly and may not produce any commercial benefit for a sponsor. But Thom and O'Connell maintain it is worthy for scientific interest alone.

"If they become extinct, everyone will say to the scientific community 'why didn't you do something?'" said O'Connell. "We are trying to do that as a preventive measure."

As nobody knows how long the sharks live, how often they breed or even how they breed, the impact of fishing cannot be measured and it might be years before the effect is felt.

(Reuter)



COOLUM BEACH, Australia (Oct. 16): Volunteers risk their lives to rescue a distressed, five-ton baby humpback whale which had beached itself after being caught in a shark net off Coolum Beach on the Gold Coast. The two-year-old baby was eventually reunited with its mother who had patrolled beyond the breakers during the entire seven-hour operation which had involved over 30 people.

(AFP PHOTO)

Ancient Shipwreck Off Malaysia Yields Secrets

KUANTAN, Malaysia — It was the crack of dawn and the men on board the lone fishing boat, anchored more than 40 miles off Malaysia's east coast town of Kuantan, had already begun their day's work.

Instead of casting fishing nets as the boat pitched and rolled in the South China Sea, these men used a basket attached to a winch in hopes of reeling in a catch of a different kind — ceramics from a shipwreck believed to be 500 to 600 years old.

The seabed ceramics were discovered in April of last year by Swedish engineer Sten Sjostrand, an amateur salvager of ancient ships. After "miles and miles of sonar scanning", Sjortrand says, he detected the shipwreck more than 45 meters down in international waters.

"There were no more divers to spare, so I sent down a remote operated vehicle to survey the site...and what we saw was just incredible," says Sjostrand.

His videotape of the wreck site when it was first found clearly shows an assortment of ceramic ware including bowls and serving dishes — "some just lying exposed, and others as they had been packed, in stacks on their side and partly buried in the seabed."

Sjostrand estimates the cargo of celadon — a form of glazed pottery that pre-dates blue and white porcelain — to number around 30,000 pieces. He believes the ship and cargo came from Thailand.

"If it was all intact and in perfect condition the total cargo may have been worth between $3-4 million," he said in a recent interview.

Sjostrand says that being in deep water saved the wreck, which he has named the Royal Nanhai, from being plundered by treasure hunters.

"These waters hold many wrecks similar to the Royal Nanhai but none have ever been found with its entire cargo still intact," the 52-year-old shipwreck Buff said.

Malaysia's coast line is said to be a treasure trove of ancient seafaring vessels that were known to ply the route from India and Arabia to China and back, passing through the Straits of Malacca and the South China Sea.

In recent years, several wrecks, including a 170-year-old British merchant vessel, Diana, and a 400-year-old Dutch East India ship, Nassau, that sank in battle have been successfully excavated.

Diana's cargo of porcelain fetched 8 million ringgit ($3.2 million) during an auction in Amsterdam in 1995.

The Nassau, though not boasting a precious cargo, was considered historically significant enough by the Malaysian government for it to foot the entire $1.2 million cost of an archaeological excavation of the vessel last year.

The government plans to set up a maritime museum to house items recovered from shipwrecks.

Most such salvage operations have been initiated by foreign parties with the government's approval but now Malaysian companies attracted by the lure of treasure from the deep are getting in on the act.

One such company, Serene Zone, recently was granted rights to excavate the wreck of another Dutch ship believed to have sunk more than 200 years ago in the Strait of Malacca.

Initial investigations show that the ship, the P. Seesta, was carrying a cargo of ceramics.

Apart from the Royal Nanhai, Sjostrand also claims to have discovered two other similar wrecks and the possibility of a fourth.

"(The fourth) is unique, because we found the cargo on the seabed in the shape of a ship, but there was no sign of any wooden structure," said Sjostrand who has not yet given up hope of finding the actual wreck which he believes is embedded in mud on the sea floor.

He has named the two other wrecks the Nanyang and Longquan and refers to the wreck site as Xuante.

Having spent more than $60,000 of his own funds on the project so far, Sjostrand hopes to be able to recover his costs from the sale of the items.

But that is secondary to the opportunity this discovery provides for a better understanding of the history of ceramics, he says.

"By the time we finish with these four wrecks we will have a better understanding of the development of the Thai ceramic industry," says Sjostrand, who welcomes assistance from experts in the field of marine archeology and ceramics to document the recovered artefacts.

"I don't need academic credit, I just want to do a good job," he said.

"There were no more divers to spare, so I sent down a remote operated vehicle to survey the site...and what we saw was just incredible."

"By the time we finish with these four wrecks we will have a better understanding of the development of the Thai ceramic industry."

(Reuter)

Cyanide Kills Fish in Manila Bay

MANILA, Philippines -- Investigators announced recently that cyanide caused a massive fish kill last week in Manila Bay, but said it was unclear whether the substance was released from a passing ship or a sewer.

Most of Manila and neighboring towns and provinces empty their sewers into the bay.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources and the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources said cyanide was found in all samples of dead fish taken from a 2.5-kilometer (1.5-mile) stretch of the bay along Roxas Boulevard.

They said the source of the chemical could not be immediately traced because cyanide easily dissipates when exposed to sunlight.

Massive numbers of dead fish washed up on the shore of the bay. Workers had to spend the entire day shoveling the fish into barrels to clear the shore.

Fisheries Director Dennis Araullo, who estimated that about 30 tons of fish were killed, said police will need to check which factories in Manila use the chemical and which ships may have been carrying it at the time of the incident.

Government officials have recommended since the poisoning that a plant be built to treat waste in Manila sewers before they empty into the bay.

Despite the pollution, the bay remains one of Manila's main sources of fish and other marine products.

(AP)

French Phone Numbers Grow to 10 Digits

PARIS — French telephone numbers will grow from eight to ten digits from Friday evening, in a shake-up of the system designed to cope with ever-expanding demand for lines.

From 11:00 p.m (2100 GMT) October 18, current eight-figure numbers will be given a two-digit prefix indicating region, with the current interdepartmental prefix 16 being abolished.

The main points of the shake-up include:

- All current eight figure numbers will be expanded by two prefix digits: 01 for Paris, 02 (northwest), 03 (northeast), 04 (southeast) and 05 (southwest).
- When calling within France, simply dial the new 10-digit number.
- When calling from abroad leave off the o, so Paris numbers remain the same i.e. 33 1 then the old eight-figure number. Provincial numbers follow the same model, with the 1 replaced by 2, 3, 4, or 5.
- The access code for international calls from France to other countries will change from the current 19 to 00, followed by the country code.
- For mobile phones, add 06 to the current eight-figure numbers.

The changes are aimed at providing capacity for 470 million numbers, against the current 60 million. France Telecom predicts this will be sufficient until the year 2050. Current demand is for 1 million new numbers per year.

To ease the switchover, particularly for foreigners calling France, the company is assigning 15 operators to answer queries, with particular attention to high-traffic countries like United States, Japan, Morocco and Algeria.

(AFP)

10 Foods to Keep You Healthy

BANANAS

Advantage: Potassium

Low in kilojoules and fat, the banana is a perfect example of a flavorful food that is exceptionally good for you. It contains a number of minerals, notably possium, one of the body's most important elements. Potassium provides a counterbalancing action with sodium and is directly connected to proper fluid balance and overall muscle tone. A potassium shortage can lead to weakness, insomnia, even an irregular heart rate. Keep up your natural potassium supply with a banana a day, sliced on cereal, wrapped into pancakes or frozen on a stick.

BRAN MUFFINS

Advantage: Fiber

Wheat bran boasts a healthy amount of cellulose, the natural fiber thought to aid in the prevention of colon cancer and other intestinal diseases. Diets rich in fiber have also been found to help reduce serum cholesterol, implicated in coronary and circulatory conditions. A bran muffin is a tasty way to put fiber in your diet.

BROCCOLI

Advantage: Vitamins A & C

One cup of lightly steamed broccoli contains only 167 kilojoules, yet provides 75 to 100 percent of the suggested adult daily requirement of vitamin A. This vitamin is essential not just for better eyesight, but also for helping to maintain the body's immune function and keeping bones and teeth in good order. In addition, broccoli contains vitamin C which, like vitamin A, is thought to provide a link to cancer prevention. As a snack, tossed into salads, or as a side dish, broccoli—the stems as well as the flowers—should be a must on everyone's list.

CHICKEN

Advantage: Lean protein

Protein is composed of amino acids, whose essential roles in overall health include proper immune function and hormone balance, good muscle tone, and even skin resilience. Chicken is one of the best protein choices. Easily digested, it has, gram for gram, more protein than steak does, and without the fat kilojoules of beef. Chicken is also a good source of the minerals sulphur, phosphorus, selenium and copper.

FLOUNDER

Advantage: Poly-unsaturated fat

According to current research, poly-unsaturated fats found in flounder can actually help improve the quality of one's general health by lowering blood-cholesterol levels. Flounder has much lower levels of saturated fats than red meat or even poultry. As a protein source, flounder is excellent as well, with 115 grams providing more than a third of the adult recommended daily allowance.

LOW-FAT MILK

Advantage: Calcium and phosphorus

These two essential and complementary minerals are found together in milk, and in a ratio beneficial to the absorption and utilization of the two elements. Calcium is needed for regular muscle function as well as for strong teeth and bones. Phosphorus is involved in nearly all metabolic functions, including heart and muscle contraction, the digestive processes, and the transfer of cellular energy. What we don't need are the excess fats contained in whole-milk products. Low-fat milk provides a good compromise: a small amount of fat to aid nutrient absorption, especially of the fat-soluble vitamins A and D, usually added to milk.

MUSHROOMS

Advantage: Low kilojoule, low-fat nutrition

For those who have nibbled on carrot and celery sticks, raw mushrooms provide a pleasing alternative. A cup of the tasty fungi contains about 84 kilojoules. They also make an elegant addition to salads, clear soups, and main dishes.

Mushrooms are well supplied with potassium and phosphorus, and are fortified with a healthy dose of biotin, a B vitamin. But for some people they can cause a troublesome allergy. East with caution if you are sensitive to foods containing yeast.

ORANGES

Advantage: Vitamin C

The orange is a great year-round fruit providing an excellent source of vitamin C. It also packs bonus nutrients in the forms of calcium and potassium, and is a good source of vitamin A. To get the most of the orange's nutrients, plus the benefit of its fiber, eat the fruit itself rather than its juice. Whole oranges tend to be less sweet than orange juice (which often contains added sugar) and thus are beneficial for those with blood-sugar concerns.

PASTA

Advantage: Carbohydrates

Once considered fattening, pasta has finally received proper recognition as an excellent source of carbohydrates, the chief supplier of energy that fuels all body functions, from muscle action to the digestion and assimilation of foods. The lengthy digestive process of the complex carbohydrates in pasta helps promote balanced blood-sugar levels and a sustained release of energy, perfect for extra stamina.

POTATOES

Advantage: Carbohydrates

Potatoes, like pasta, have the undeserved reputation for being anathema to dieters. In fact, a medium-sized potato has only about 460 kilojoules. It is the butter or sour cream topping that adds the fat. On the other hand, a potato crowned with crunchy vegetables and a smattering of low-fat cheese makes a satisfying and healthful meal.

In addition to their complex carbohydrates, potatoes supply a variety of minerals such as magnesium, iron, phosphorus and potassium. Enjoy potatoes with their skins to maximize their nutrition potential.

Bon appetit!

Choking Pollution Clouds Tehran's Future

It may appear quite normal to some authorities, but the thick layer of pollution blanketing the Iranian capital chokes residents and costs billions of dollars.

In the "city of golden opportunities", as the rustic migrators refer to it, traffic policemen, street vendors, pedestrians and drivers must wear air masks to avoid inhaling a toxic cocktail created by a mix of exhaust fumes, dirt and heavy air including lead.

Pollution, a health destructive element in an exploding city with an uncontrollable population due to a rapidly growing economy, is posing a threat to a robust life and as a consequence of that, it is really a grave problem in a city like Tehran.

It would have been of great benefit to Tehranis if those people who were responsible for the planning of the city, its environment and in control of its ecosystem to devise ways and apply policies to safeguard the healthy growth of the city.

Great significance must be attached to the critical problem of pollution in order to prevent health impairment of this population.

According to a report by a Western news agency some of Tehran pre-schoolers recently rallied in the center of the capital in protest (in a plaintive protest) against air pollution in Tehran.

The children hand in hand accompanied by their teachers and escorted by police assembled in front of the main office of the Organization of Transport and Traffic (OTT) and called out against their "gray and polluted sky."

"We want a blue sky" read several small placards carried by the under-7s.

The children had congregated to earnestly appeal to the authorities to do something about the toxic fumes expelled from vehicles in Tehran.

The OTT is an organization answerable to the Tehran Municipality which in theory fights pollution and controls the ecosystem of the capital.

According to official figures, more than 60 percent of the pollution is caused by exhaust fumes from the city's nearly two million cars, buses and trucks - many of them old with poor combustion.

The main culprits of the pollution in Tehran are the old vehicles, which churn out several thousands tons of poisonous gas each day, and which lack sophisticated smoke-control device.

A member of 12 million population in Tehran inhales an average of half a gram of lead per day as a ration of poisonous substance released into the air by vehicles using six million liters of poor-quality leaded gasoline, a Western news agency report quoted official statistics.

NYC Takes Tobacco Companies to Court

NEW YORK - New York City has sued major tobacco companies in the state's highest court to get reimbursed for treating people with smoking-related diseases such as lung cancer, city officials said on Thursday.

The city joins 15 us states along with Los Angeles and San Francisco in suing the tobacco makers to recoup health-care costs.

Th city accuses the companies of suppressing the results of studies that, as far back as 1953, linked smoking to diseases such as lung cancer, and of misleading the public to attract new smokers.

New York City says it spends 300 million dollars a year on health-care costs attributable to tobacco use.

The targeted companies are Philip Morris, R.J. Reynolds, Brown and Williamson, BAT Industries, Lorillard, American Tobacco, Liggett and United States Tobacco as well as two industry-related research groups.

Last year, the city imposed draconian rules barring smoking in most restaurants except those with special facilities.

On Tuesday night a community just outside Washington, Friendship Heights, approved the toughest anti-smoking law in the country by banning smoking on most city streets.

(AFP)

HEALTH CAPSULES®
by Michael A. Petti, M.D.

IF MILK GIVES YOU GAS, CRAMPS OR DIARRHEA, CAN YOU PREVENT THEM?

USUALLY. DRINK VERY SMALL AMOUNTS OF MILK SEVERAL TIMES A DAY AND VERY GRADUALLY INCREASE THE AMOUNT OVER 3 MONTHS OR MORE.

Health Capsules is not intended to be of a diagnostic nature.

BIZARRO by Dan Piraro

I GUESS I'M JUST NOT VERY CREATIVE, BUT I CAN'T THINK OF ANYTHING TO CALL IT EXCEPT "OCTOPUSS."

FERD'NAND (R) by Henrik Rehr

NANCY (R) by Guy & Brad Gilchrist

I THOUGHT OF SOMETHING REALLY WEIRD TODAY

WHAT IF WE NEVER GROW UP?

WHAT IF EVERY YEAR ON OUR BIRTHDAYS, SOME COSMIC COMPUTER ERROR HAPPENS AND WE HAVE TO LIVE THE SAME YEAR OVER AND OVER FOREVER?

YOU MEAN LIKE IN THE COMIC STRIPS?

YOU KNOW, SOME OF THOSE CHARACTERS DO LOOK GOOD FOR THEIR AGE

Thought

Imam Rida, peace be with him, said: Engraved on the ring of Jesus, peace be with him, were two sentences taken from the Gospel: Blessed is the servant who remembers Allah for His own sake, and woe unto the servant who forgets Allah for his own sake.

Health Report

The Good News

- Along with protecting against heart disease and osteoporosis, *estrogen replacement therapy* may ward off another ill: degenerative arthritis. The risk of osteoarthritis of the hip may be cut by nearly half in women who take estrogen for at least 10 years. Once therapy is stopped, the benefit vanishes.
- The U.S. government has okayed Accolate, the first of a new class of drugs for *ASTHMA*. It blocks the activity of certain molecules in the lungs that cause symptoms.

PRAYER

Noon	11:49
Evening	17:42
Dawn (tomorrow)	4:43
Sunrise (tomorrow)	6:16

Today In History

Oct. 21 Monday (30 Mehr 1375)

1913 - Royalist uprising in potugal fails.

1916 - Austria's Premier, Count Carl Sturgkhi, is assasinated.

1938 - japanese troops take Canton in China.

1945 - Women vote for first time in france.

1947 - U.N. General Assembly asks greece and balkan powers to settle differences peacefully.

1951 - President Gamal Abdel Nasser confiscates property of wealthy egyptians.

1963 - Cuba's Premier Fidel Castro asks for immediate end to U.S. economic blockade of Cuba.

1969 - Army coup in somalia follows assasination President Shermarke.

1969 - Willy Brandt becomes first social democratic chancellor in W. Germany's 20-year history.

1971 - North Vietnam's Premier Phan Van Dong says his government is ready to accept cease-fire as first step toward settlement of Vietnam war.

1973 - Four Persian Gulf states cut off oil supplies to United States to protest U.S. arms shipments to israel in Middle East conflict.

1989 - honduran jet with 146 people aboard breaks apart in flight and crashes, killing at least 120 people.



PRESIDENT RAFSANJANI'S VISIT TO MESHKIN SHAHR IS EXTREMELY WELCOME

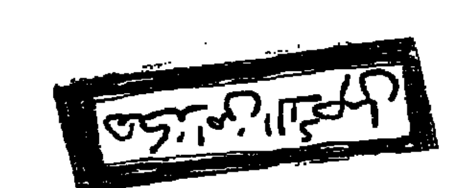


Around 1,000 Warrior Basijis of Meshkin Shahr Accompanied by Martyrdom-Seeking People of Meshkin Shahr Have Traveled the 120-Kilometer Distance Between Meshkin Shahr and Ardebil on Foot to Welcome the Follower of Grand Leader and Flag Bearer of Construction, President Hashemi Rafsanjani.

On the Occasion of President's Visit to Ardebil Province, the Water-Supplying and Gas-Supplying Projects Having Approximately 6-Billion-Rial and 11-Billion-Rial Expenditures Respectively Will Be Inaugurated.

Also the President Will Start the Construction Operation of Geebiglu Dam With a 120-Billion-Rial Expenditure to Supply Water for Farms.

GOVERNOR & MARTYRDOM-SEEKING PEOPLE OF MESHKIN SHAHR



Amulets for the Gods, Souvenirs for the Tourists

Since Miyako No Yoshika did it first sometime toward the end of the 8th century, climbing Mount Fuji has been something of an obsession with the Japanese. As this year's season ended, an associated press correspondent joined the crowds.

ATOP MOUNT FUJI, Japan — The sun peeks over the horizon, sending bright red rays up like the spokes of a flaming wheel into the frigid blue air.

Stars still shimmer in the west. The tops of a cloud bank glow with the light of the moon. All is calm, timeless — until you look down.

There, in an unbroken zigzag of flashlight beams, thousands of climbers are snaking their way up the steep, black slope of Mount Fuji. On the summit, there are hundreds more, laughing, drinking, praying.

Even shopping.

And in the center of it all, at the bottom of the crater of the tallest peak in Japan, there is a message, one of dozens, written in beige, fist-sized stones: "Fumi loves Ken."

Isao Kasai, a stout, graying man who lives near the base of the mountain, has climbed Fuji a dozen or so times and never tires of it.

He has been at the top in the middle of a storm, has seen the mountain cast its huge shadow on a sea of clouds in the valleys below, has skidded down its cinder-covered slopes.

"This mountain is special," he says. "This is the heart of Japan."

Though 85 percent of Japan is covered by mountains, Fuji does indeed stand alone. Its peak is Japan's highest ground — at 3,776 meters (12,385 feet) above sea level. Rising in an almost perfectly symmetrical cone, Fuji is universally regarded as Japan's most beautiful summit.

But for all its size and grandeur, Fuji is an easy climb.

During the official climbing season, from July through August, 150,000 to 200,000 people reach the summit.

Most go up at night to view the sunrise. Tour buses from Tokyo and Osaka — Japan's two biggest cities — bring in droves of climbers each afternoon and take them out, exhausted, the next morning.

When the lodges and shops close for the season, the tourists taper off. And before the first snows of autumn begin to fall, Kasai, a member of the Keep Fuji Clean Society, and thousands of other volunteers scour the slopes of garbage — tons of cigarette butts, beer cans, candy wrappers.

For the next nine months, Fuji will sleep.

Traditional "Torii" gates at the summit, guarded by statues of snarling lion-dogs, mark the beginning of Fuji's sacred ground. On opposite sides of the mountain's deep brown crater stand two concrete Shinto shrines.

Glittering amulets and little tin bells deposited for luck by climbers young and old are piled around each shrine. Coins are stuck into cracks in the weather-beaten gray wood of the gates.

Throughout most of Japan's history, Fuji was revered as the resting place of spirits, the dwelling place of gods.

Pilgrims carrying sticks and bells would climb to its peak to purify themselves or to perform a more public service — keeping divine wrath from befalling their community.

Shrines to the goddess of the mountain, Konohana No Sakuyahime, which means something like princess of the blossoming tree flower, were built all over the country. Miniature Fujis were erected in the gardens of the well-to-do.

"This mountain is special," he says. "This is the heart of Japan."

The fervor of Fuji worship cooled at the turn of the century, when Japan raced to modernize, and Westernize, its culture. To most climbers today, the ascent is a been-there, done-that sort of excursion. Prayers at the shrines are more an afterthought, out of a sense of tradition, than anything else.

But the mountain's mystical appeal has not disappeared.

Several new religious groups have built headquarters at the volcano's base. One is the Soka Gakkai, one of Japan's largest Buddhist sects.

Another is the doomsday cult Aum Shinri Kyo, whose founder is now on trial for allegedly masterminding the deadly nerve gas attack in Tokyo's subways in 1995. At their commune on the edge of the Sea of Trees, dozens of his followers still go about their daily routine.

A thick, wet fog covers station no. 5, the point half way up the mountain where — except for hard-core traditionalists — the climb begins.

Here, climbers park their recreational vehicles and cars in huge lots and start off in style.

There are lodges, restaurants, souvenir shops, vending machines selling everything from Mild Seven cigarettes to boss coffee.

Inside the shops are canned oxygen and lava-rock candy, in pink or bluish gray.

Most of the people at station no. 5 are picnickers, day-trippers who go no farther.

For those who do, the walk out begins on pavement, turns quickly to a broad, well-packed trail and gradually winds its way up into a narrow, looser mix of black or deep violet cinder and small rock that continues with just a few craggy basalt interruptions all the way to the peak.

From station no. 5, which is at an altitude of 2,500 meters (8,200 feet), the walk to the summit takes five hours.

Most climbers, however, stop for the night along the way at the more than a dozen lodges, where they try to sleep shoulder-to-shoulder on the floor, sharing a big blanket with the person next to them, stranger or not. The average rate is about 7,000 yen ($70), which includes a light meal.

Horses can be hired at station no. 5 for 12,000 yen ($120). But even they stop at station no. 7, at the 2,700-meter (8,900-foot) level. After that, all climbers must two-leg it to the top.

The grade at first is gentle. But near the peak, the main trails steepen into rocky stairways cluttered with sweaty climbers stopping to catch their breath before making the final assault.

The year-round population at the crater is five.

All are scientists who rotate in and out for three-week shifts at the squat government observatory that monitors both the weather and the volcano's inner rumblings.

Japan, whose islands arc along the Pacific Ocean's "Ring of Fire", was born in the spewing lava and seismic spasms of volcanoes like Mount Fuji. Many still transform its landscape.

Though officially dormant, Fuji has had 17 major eruptions in historical times. The last was in 1707, less than two months after a severe earthquake killed nearly 5,000 people. Ash from the eruption blanketed Tokyo, 100 kilometers (60 miles) to the northeast.

Today, even at the bottom of the 500-meter-wide (quarter-mile) crater, there is hardly a hint of life. There are no sulfur smells, no plumes of steam, no bubbling cauldrons of molten rock.

Even so, most vulcanologists believe Fuji will erupt again. But probably not in the near future.

Most vulcanologists believe Fuji will erupt again. But probably not in the near future.

The sky is a bright azure. A large crowd mills about in front of a brick building housing restrooms. A smaller mob browses at the summit souvenir shop, picking through shelves lined with "Japan's no. 1" pennants, picture postcards, gilded key chains.

Ayaka and Chizuru Ito, 9-year-old twin sisters, sit side by side a few meters from the crowds, looking out over a sea of clouds that glow like pearls in the early morning sun.

They have done it. Made it to the top. And with them to share the moment are their parents, their 13-year-old brother, their septuagenarian grandparents, an aunt, an uncle.

How do they feel?

"Happy, I suppose," says Ayaka, weakly sipping from a tin cup full of hot coffee.

"Actually, I'm just tired," says Chizuru.

Then, after a moment of silence, Chizuru offers a shy smile. "I suppose I'm happy, too." *(AP)*

Rebar to Use ASIASAT 2 for Cable TV Distribution

HONG KONG — Asia Satellite Telecommunications Co. Ltd. (ASIASAT) said Monday it had signed a five-year lease agreement with Rebar Tele-Communications Co. Ltd. of Taiwan for use of ASIASAT 2.

The company said Rebar, a subsidiary of Rebar Enterprise Group, will use the capacity to distribute its digital television channel, U3, which will offer a mix of cartoon and sports programming to operators in Taiwan.

Service is expected to commence in December, with Rebar becoming the first Taiwan clients for ASIASAT, the company said in a statement.

The parties also reached an agreement for the use of a transponder segment on ASIASAT 2 by Rebar's satellite news gathering operations.

Rebar Group has diversified business operations in the manufacturing, servicing, commercial banking, and property insurance sectors in Taiwan.

Hong Kong-listed ASIASAT is owned by Hong Kong's Hutchison Whampoa Ltd, Britain's Cable and Wireless plc and China's investment vehicle, China International Trust and Investment Group (CITIC).

The company, through a subsidiary, owns and operates satellites ASIASAT 1 and ASIASAT 2, which provide transponder capacity to broadcasters and telecommunications users.

The company's third satellite, ASIASAT 3, is to be launched later this year. Unlike its smaller predecessors, it will not be launched by the troubled Chinese Long March Rocket but by Russia's Proton launcher in Kazakhstan.

ASIASAT 3 has 44 transponders, 33 percent bigger than ASIASAT 2, which is already one of the largest over Asia. A transponder receives and transmits signals.

(AFP)

Aberfan Survivor Faces Up to 30-Year-Old Nightmare

ABERFAN, Wales — Gaynor Madgwick was buried alive as a black sea of mud engulfed her school. Classmates choked to death in front of her.

Thirty years on, the nightmare of Aberfan is as vivid as ever to Madgwick who lost her childhood in an instant and has spent a lifetime fighting the demons of the past.

A total of 116 children in the tightly-knit Welsh mining community died when millions of tons of sludge from a collapsed coal tip buried their school.

Guilt abounded among the survivors.

They became terrified of the dark and always had to sleep with a light on. Talking of that horrific day was impossible. In the days when counseling was in its infancy, terror and grief stayed bottled up.

But Madgwick has helped to release the emotions of her fellow survivors by finally publishing the harrowing account she wrote as a little girl of the day forever etched on the national conscience of Britain.

The disaster occurred on October 21, 1966, killing 144 people altogether, 116 of them children. An inquiry found that the coal tip slid down the mountain after being undermined by a natural spring.

A whole generation in the small community was wiped out.

Madgwick's life was saved because she got up from her desk as the huge black wave rolled down onto her school with a deadly thunder.

Her grandfather was among the first of the rescuers who found the eight-year-old pinned under a rusty old radiator that saved her from choking to death. Her brother and sister died.

After four years of suffering in guilt-ridden silence, she poured out her recollections of that horrific day in a school exercise book.

In the stark and poignant prose of a 12-year-old, she wrote: "I didn't cry afterwards as I didn't know what was happening. It was all like a dream. Bodies lay crushed and buried and the survivors lay looking at their best friends, dead.

"I could just see someone's hand through the crack in the wall. I didn't know whether it was a boy or a girl. I squeezed the hand and pinched it to see if it was alive but I could see that it was dead. For all I knew, it could have been my brother's hand."

Thirty years on, the nightmare of Aberfan is as vivid as ever to Madgwick who lost her childhood in an instant and has spent a lifetime fighting the demons of the past.

Her written account lay in the attic untouched for years. Madgwick married the local postman, had three children of her own and built a new life.

Only now, as the 30th anniversary of the disaster draws near, has she felt ready to publish "Struggling Out of the Darkness: A Survivor's Story".

After the agonies of waiting to be rescued from that muddy hell hole, she took one final look which was to be etched on her mind for life.

"As I looked back, I saw my friends dead — the last time for me to see them."

Rescue brought little respite from the horrors she witnessed. "Dead bodies lay on the floor and some were bloodstained. It was horrible outside. Screams and muck everywhere."

(Reuter)

Brazil, China in First Joint Developing Country Space Program

BEIJING — China and Brazil are preparing to launch the first joint space satellite project undertaken by two developing countries, after a series of long and tortuous negotiations.

"There has never been an integrated space project between two developing countries, and the results are drawing a lot of curiosity from the scientific community," said Maury Lima, of the Brazilian Space Research Institute (BSRI).

The China-Brazil Earth Resources Satellite I (CBERS I) will be a terrestrial observation facility equipped with three cameras.

China will provide the launch rocket, service and live load modules and the infrared scanner. Brazil will put together the body of the satellite, the solar panel and wide-field imager (WFI).

The satellite is scheduled for launch at the end of 1997, over a year later than expected because of renegotiations demanded by Brazil that the CBERS II successor to the current project be assembled in Brazil.

The CBERS I has a predicted life-span of two years.

"Brazil has had to politically negotiate to have the second satellite assembled in BSRI laboratories in the state of Sao Paulo," said Lima, who coordinates assembly and testing. "These negotiations have taken time."

They have also raised the cost of the satellite.

The total cost of the project, including the price of launching the satellite into orbit, has estimated at $150 million, $50 million of which has been picked up by Brazil.

"There has never been an integrated space project between two developing countries, and the results are drawing a lot of curiosity from the scientific community."

But the contribution guaranteed by the South American partner is likely to double because of administrative problems, according to a Brazilian aerospace official, who asked not to be identified.

According to the official, China is looking to benefit from foreign expertise, as well as from Western quality control procedures and technological know-how.

"It's why Brazil wanted the second satellite to be assembled on its own territory," the official said.

Brazil's interest in the project is largely economic.

"We want to diversify our projects and expand our profits," said Decio Castilho Ceballos, another senior BSRI official.

The two launches on Chinese Long March Rockets "will cost U.S.$50 million each, a price-tag that would have doubled if we had used European or U.S. launch rockets," said Ceballos, who has just attended Beijing's 47th Astronautical Exhibition.

The use of the launched satellites will be shared by the two partners, as will the profits. They hope to sell satellite images to about 100 countries.

But cooperation will not stop there. The two countries are working on an agreement to build CBERS III and CBERS IV, which could be signed when Chinese Premier Li Peng visits Brazil at the end of the year, Lima said. *(AFP)*



Buyoya Says No Talks Unless Sanctions on Burundi Lifted

BUJUMBURA — Burundi strongman Pierre Buyoya his Tutsi-dominated regime will not be forced into peace talks with Hutu rebels while a regional economic embargo remains in force.

But Buyoya reassured a visiting delegation of regional leaders, who are now considering tagging another African summit on the troubles in Burundi, that he was committed to eventual negotiations, a statement from his office announced.

"They very much appreciated his commitment to negotiate" and noted his "firm commitment to go to the forefront in the search for peace by negotiation," the statement said.

However, Buyoya's regime still refuses to hold talks with the rebels "with a noose around its neck," the statement said, referring to the sanctions imposed by Burundi's neighbors after a military-backed coup in July ousted a democratically elected Hutu president.

The blockade was imposed by eight nations in a bid to force Buyoya to restore the constitution in this landlocked Central African nation and to meet Hutu rebels for peace talks.

Friday's visit by regional ministers took place against a backdrop of fierce fighting in neighboring Zaire between Zairean troops and armed gangs of Tutsis allegedly infiltrating the country from Burundi and attacking Hutus. However, Burundi's Tutsi-dominated government has denied fuelling the violence.

The aim of the visit was to inform Buyoya of the results of a regional summit in Tanzania last weekend which decided to maintain the embargo.

A member of the delegation that met in Bujumbura told AFP that another summit of regional African leaders was forecast to be held in the Zambian capital of Lusaka on November 12.

The committee monitoring the sanctions is already due to meet in Lusaka on November 7.

Zairean Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Jean-Marie Kititwa-Tumasi said that another regional summit "is going to be held urgently," but did not elaborate.

Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi said earlier this week that a new summit could suspend sanctions against Burundi "if Major Buyoya keeps his promise to negotiate with the rebellion."

(AFP)

Asian Development Bank to Help Poor in Bangladesh

DHAKA, Bangladesh — The Asian Development Bank will loan Bangladesh $90 million next year to create business and health care facilities for the urban poor, an official said.

The ADB already has provided $4.7 billion to Bangladesh to build infrastructure in rural areas, said Bhanuphol Horayangura, the bank's chief in Dhaka.

More than 48 percent of Bangladesh's 120 million people are poor and can't afford enough food. Nearly 80 percent of the country's population lives in villages.

The ADB loan will be disbursed by the Bangladesh bank, the Central Bank, to both government and voluntary agencies to help the poor.

(AP)

Micro-Credit to the Poor Is a Key for Food Security

DES MOINES, Iowa — Bangladeshi economist Muhammad Yunus, who founded a highly successful "Bank of the Poor," told international food experts here that cheap credit for the poor was the key to rooting out poverty and thereby eliminating hunger worldwide.

Addressing a symposium on "Food Security: Solutions for the 21st Century," Yunus said his Grameen Bank was now a model duplicated in 56 countries, including Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam and even the United States.

The bank's mission is to offer small, noncollateral loans to rural people. Although the average loan is less than $100, the money almost always provides recipients with a way to increase their incomes.

Borrowers use the loan to plant a crop, buy a cow or chickens or establish a small custom grain mill.

Yunus, who was awarded the 1994 world food prize -- dubbed the Nobel Prize for agriculture -- for his credit-for-the-poor scheme, said a micro-credit summit would be held in Washington next February with the goal of providing cheap credit to 100 million poor people, particularly rural women, by 2006.

Currently $7 billion in outstanding loans ranging each between 35 and 150 dollars have been extended to 13 million poor people and the repayment rate is 97 percent, said World Bank vice president Ismail Serageldin.

Yunus said that in Bangladesh nearly 50 percent of those who have used his credit scheme have been able to pull themselves out of poverty.

"I am usually introduced as managing director of the 'bank of the poor'. My dream is to become known as managing director of the 'bank of the former poor," he added.

Yunus said the best way to combat world hunger was to promote self-employment as an alternative to wage employment.

It was in 1976 in the wake of a famine which had claimed 1.5 million lives in his country that Yunus established Grameen Bank, which now has more than 1,000 branches in rural areas of Bangladesh.

Yunus said Grameen was a "sound financial institution" which was now spawning several spin-off companies, including Grameen Telecom, a telecommunications network enabling rural women to earn an income by providing cellular telephone service in rural Bangladesh.

Grameen energy was also set up to bring solar energy to rural areas which do not have electricity.

Yunus was one of 12 laureates of the World Food Prize present at the forum, held to mark the tenth anniversary of the prize.

The prize, administered by a Des Moines-based foundation, rewards individuals who have advanced human development by improving the quality, quantity or availability of food in the world.

(AFP)



15,000-20,000 Child Fighters in Liberia



UNITED NATIONS — More than 15,000 children are being deployed in combat by rival factions in war-torn Liberia and many are sexually abused, UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali said.

In a report to the UN Security Council, the UN chief said: "The children, who are under the age of 17, both male and female, are compelled to witness, and sometimes commit, human rights atrocities. They are also subject to sexual and drug abuse."

He said the number of child soldiers in the West African country was estimated at between 15,000 and 20,000.

He said that according to the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), which was addressing the problem of child soldiers in Liberia, all the factions had recruited and deployed children for direct combat, "often under duress and sometimes through peer pressure or manipulation."

Boutros-Ghali said that UNICEF was trying to implement special reintegration programs for child soldiers, who would return to their home communities "at the earliest opportunity after demobilization."

The Security Council, in a resolution adopted on August 30, condemned the "inhumane and abhorrent" use of children in Liberia's factional war. The council in the same resolution asked Boutros-Ghali to report back on the deployment of children in the fighting.

An August 17 Abuja agreement subscribed to by all the factions provided for a cease-fire as well as the disengagement and disarmament of some 60,000 combatants before democratic elections are held in May next year.

But skirmishes have continued between rival factions in west and southeast Liberia despite the revised peace plan, preventing the delivery of badly needed aid to thousands of vulnerable residents affected by nearly seven years of bloody civil war.

(AFP)

Indonesia to Eradicate Absolute Poverty by 2004

JAKARTA — The government hopes to eradicate absolute poverty in Indonesia by 2004, State Minister for National Development Planning Ginanjar Kartasasmita was quoted as saying.

"By 2004 we hope to have alleviated absolute poverty, but not relative poverty, because the latter can never be totally mitigated," Kartasasmita was quoted as saying in the Jakarta Post.

Absolute poverty is defined in Indonesia as those living in rural areas who earn less than 600 rupiah (26 cents) a day and those living in urban areas who earn less than 900 rupiah a day.

The estimate is based on the World Bank's Power Purchasing Parity, a standard which defines people's wealth by what they can afford to buy.

(AFP)

Malaysia Plans to Cane Illegal Immigrants

KUALA LUMPUR — Malaysia will impose harsher penalties, including caning, to curb an influx of illegal immigrants, Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad said.

Mahathir said the National Security Council had decided to amend existing laws on illegal immigrants to include caning and deportation in the wake of rising security and social problems.

"We have decided to take a firm stand against these immigrants and those (locals) who employ them," Mahathir, who is also home minister, was quoted as saying in the Star Daily.

"Whoever employs illegal immigrants will also be severely dealt with in the same way," said Mahathir, warning Malaysians who hired the immigrants would also be caned.

Malaysia's rapid economic growth, averaging more than eight percent per annum since 1987, has caused a labor crunch in the agricultural and construction sectors.

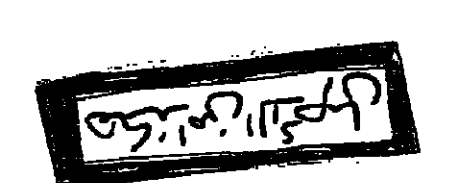
There are 750,000 legal foreign workers and another one million illegal immigrants in the country, officials said. The legal workers are mainly from Indonesia, Bangladesh, the Philippines, Thailand, Pakistan, India and Burma.

Mahathir also said authorities would step up surveillance along the Malaysia's coast to prevent the illegals from sneaking back into the country.

"If the immigrants (who are deported) come back illegally, then their punishment will be increased," Mahathir said, without elaborating.

A recent spate of complaints about fighting and misconduct among Bangladeshi workers and health data showing a high rate of infectious diseases among foreign workers has prompted the government to tighten immigration controls.

(AFP)



U.S. Sets Its Own Definition of 'Piracy'

The U.S. allows and even practises piracy when it serves their purpose, but bans it when it benefits poor countries.

Piracy used to mean the high-jacking of ships on the high seas. Now, the U.S. uses the word to refer to what everybody – including most governments – in Asia is doing: Copying software for use with their computers.

Ron Eckstrom of the U.S. lobby group Business Software Alliance explains why they are lobbying Asian governments to clamp down on software copying. "Copying licensed software is a form of stealing," he says. "If you cannot afford to buy a BMW, you have no right to go into anybody's garage and steal one."

In the 18th and 19th centuries, however, the U.S. itself was a center of piracy of British books and publications. U.S. publishers justified their piracy by saying that the American public should not be denied access to British knowledge and literature just because they couldn't afford British prices. Thus the U.S. publishers pirated British materials at will.

When the U.S. couldn't afford BMWs, they went into British garages to steal some. Now that Eckstrom has a BMW, he doesn't want anybody to steal it.

Philippine Foreign Affairs Undersecretary Federico Macaranas, who must imagine himself to be under the employ of the U.S. Foreign Affairs Office, hastens to add, "Let's never use poverty as an instrument to steal." It nicely complements Eckstrom's admonition not to steal a BMW if you're too poor to afford it.

If it is a sin for the poor to steal from the rich, it must be a much bigger sin for the rich to steal from the poor.

Don't rich countries pirate our best scientists, engineers, doctors, nurses, and programers? When global corporations come to operate in the Philippines, don't they pirate the best people from local firms? If it is bad for poor countries like us to pirate the intellectual property of rich countries, isn't it a lot worse for rich countries like the U.S. to pirate our intellectuals? In fact, we are benign enough to take only a copy, leaving the original behind; they are so greedy they take away the originals and leave nothing for us.

Undersecretary Macaranas, who seems to take seriously his role as U.S. spokesman, says," Lack of technological and financial resources should no longer be used to justify piracy."

His comment reminds us that much of the world's technological and financial resources are held by rich countries, and poor countries want affordable access to these resources. It also reminds us that others had earlier used their lack of resources to justify piracy.

The U.S. for instance, enjoys a huge lead in satellite and communications technologies. When the U.S. launched spy satellites into space, a number of poorer countries protested. One could imagine them complaining: "Why are you taking aerial photos of our territory? You are taking national proprietary information: that's piracy!"

The U.S. response, in effect, said, "We have the sovereign rights to take photos of every country, including yours. You are even welcome to buy them, if you can afford them."

And because they couldn't afford BMW and satellite technologies, poor countries had no choice but to pay through the nose for Landsat photographs of their own territories.

The U.S. then went on from military to commercial satellites, transmitting video programs into other countries. Again, one could imagine more countries complaining: "Why send us these programs full of violence, crime, illicit sex and other social ills? Please stop, they violate our standards of morality."

The U.S. response, in effect, said, "Haven't you heard of the free flow of information? It means we have the right to transmit video programs to you, even if you consider them objectionable."

In the course of time, some local people actually developed a taste for these U.S. programs. They taped the U.S. video transmissions and sold the tapes locally or showed them on local TV.

Now, it was the United States' turn to complain: "Why are you copying our licensed materials without authorization? You are pirating our intellectual property rights!"

Piracy is also an emerging issue in biotechnology, another field that is very much a monopoly of advanced countries like the U.S.

U.S. researchers roam the globe looking for plants, animals, or microorganisms which show commercial promise. Many of these are indigenous herbal plants and concoctions, whose pharmacological properties are now the subject of intense interest by U.S. biotech companies. Researchers take the samples out – often without the consent of the host country – isolate the active ingredients, synthesize them in the laboratory, and patent the resulting formulations. This is known as biopiracy, a widespread practice by rich countries.

Yet, when our government licenses local firms to copy pharmaceutical formulations of global corporations, to reduce the cost of medicine for our people, the giant drug companies cry 'piracy.'

In short, the U.S. has finely tuned the definition of piracy, allowing it when it is good for rich countries like them, but banning it when it is good for poor countries like us

This is the definition that Eckstrom and Undersecretary Macaranas, two spokesmen for U.S. interests, now want us and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) to embrace.

(Courtesy Third World Network Features)

S. Korean Politics Beset by Fresh Bribery Scandal

SEOUL — South Korea, its image tainted by bribery scandals involving two former presidents, was hit by a fresh scandal on Saturday over a former defense minister.

A government official said on Saturday President Kim Young-Sam had ordered an investigation into allegations of bribery made against lee Yang-Ho, who lost his job as defense minister in a sweeping ministry reshuffle on Thursday.

"President Kim ordered the prosecution to investigate into the case to find out the truth," an official at the Presidential Office said on Saturday.

The main opposition National Congress for New Politics has accused Lee of leaking classified military information on a combat helicopter project to an arms dealer in 1995 in return for 150 million won ($181,000) in bribes.

Lee could not immediately be reached for comment, but local media reports said he had denied the allegations

Prosecution officials said the investigation would begin soon. "I can't give any details on the progress, but an investigation will start soon," said one prosecution official.

State KBS Radio said the prosecution had banned Lee from leaving the country pending the investigation.

Thursday's reshuffle, which also affected the nation's top military brass, was considered linked to the incursion by a North Korean submarine which slipped undetected into southern waters last month

The latest political scandal to hit South Korea follows President Kim's campaign to 'right the wrongs of history' which has led to the arrests of his two immediate predecessors.

Chun Doo Hwan, who ran the country between 1980-1988, was sentenced to death for masterminding a 1979 military coup and leading an army massacre of pro-democracy protestors in the city of Kwangju in the following year.

Roh Tae-Woo, who ruled between 1988-1993, was sentenced to 22-1/2 years in jail for his involvement in the coup and massacre. Both were also convicted of taking millions of dollars in bribes.

The High Court began hearing their appeals last week. *(Reuter)*

ROH TAE-WOO

CHUN DOO HWAN



KIM YOUNG-SAM

Rybkin: From Leftist Roots to Yeltsin Ally

MOSCOW — Ivan Rybkin, named Saturday as Russia's new security chief and Chechen negotiator, became an ally of President Boris Yeltsin after an unlikely starting point as a leftist deputy in Parliament with conservative leanings.

Rybkin, former speaker of the state Duma or Lower House of Parliament, was appointed to replace the ousted Alexander Lebed as secretary of the National Security Council, and to take up the Chechnya brief which Lebed left with a peace deal.

Initial reaction to Rybkin's appointment was mixed, with some experts pointing out that he had held a seat on the Kremlin Security Council when the army launched its assault on Chechnya in December 1994.

"His nomination to head the Chechnya dossier is very bad," said Andrei Piontkovsky, head of the Center for Strategic Studies Think tank. "He has never been very interested in Chechnya, but the little he did will ensure that the Chechens don't trust him."

Rybkin was born to a peasant family in Russia's southern Voronezh region, and graduated at the Volgograd Institute of Agriculture and Mechanical Engineering in 1968.

He quickly passed through the apparatchik ranks of the Soviet Communist Party, ultimately entering Parliament, or Supreme Soviet as it then was, in 1990.

A typical product of Soviet communism and the stagnation of the 1970s, Rybkin was an active participant in the resurrection of the left after Yeltsin banned the Soviet Communist Party following the abortive coup of August 1991.

As a member of the last Supreme Soviet which clashed with Yeltsin throughout 1993 in the run-up to the October uprising, Rybkin opposed the president's move to dissolve Parliament.

But the softly-spoken politician, who will be 50 on Sunday, has his roots more in the conservatism of the countryside than the extremism which pervaded the Supreme Soviet.

Crucially, he left the Parliament building before the October 1993 armed uprising was launched only to be bloodily suppressed by Yeltsin.

With his reputation still intact and his nationalist and leftist allies numerous, Rybkin, elected on the Agrarian Party ticket for Russia's first post-Soviet Parliament, the state Duma, emerged as a compromise choice for speaker of the chamber.

He was quickly drawn into Yeltsin's circle, and by 1995 he and Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin tried to launch two opposing coalition parties which would act as a bulwark to extremism and rationalize Russia's chaotic political world.

But the move backfired as the so-called Ivan Rybkin's bloc found its slogans of social justice and a mixed economy rapidly outflanked by a resurgent Communist Party.

While his party flopped, Rybkin himself was elected in the Voronezh Constituency, but was replaced as Parliament speaker by the more Orthodox Communist choice, Gennady Seleznyev. *(AFP)*

New Japanese Party Rides on Wave of Popular Disgust With Politicians

TOKYO — When the grandson of a former prime minister quit one of Japan's ruling parties in late August with plans to set up a "third force" in national politics, the timing of the next election was far from clear.

But by the time the New Democratic Party was launched by Yukio Hatoyama and dozens of other lawmakers on September 28, it was only a day after Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto had called snap elections for October 20.

Despite its infancy, the New Party has struck a chord with voters fed up with politicians mouthing slogans of "reform" – as shown by recent polls which show it rivalling the opposition New Frontier Party as the biggest political force in Japan after Hashimoto's conservative Liberal Democratic Party (LDP).

The crusading Health and Welfare Minister Naoto Kan, who jointly heads the New Party with Hatoyama, is largely credited with the popularity of the New Party, which has 52 lawmakers in the outgoing Lower House of 511 seats.

Since taking up his ministerial mantle in January, Kan has become one of Japan's most popular politicians by exposing a cover-up in his own ministry involving the use of unheated blood products carrying the HIV virus.

The scandal, revealing in sordid detail the close ties between bureaucrats and businessmen which have long typified Japanese government dealings, has so far seen the arrests of a former ministry official, three former company presidents and a doctor who used to head a government aids advisory panel.

Hatoyama and Kan, both 49, defected from New Party Sakigake, dragging other disenchanted members of the party and the Social Democratic Party (SDP) with them. These two parties formed their coalition with the LDP in mid-1994, storming out of an earlier alliance with what is now the New Frontier Party.

Hatoyama said the LDP and the SDP had "coddled" the system his grandfather Ichiro presided over as prime minister in 1955, when the LDP began its 38 years of single-party rule with the SDP as the biggest opposition party.

"The politics of cosy relations between politicians, bureaucrats and businessmen are back, and the path to the kind of government reforms that would allow this to be broken is nowhere to be seen," he said.

Expected to attract many of the estimated 50 percent of voters who are not yet committed, the New Democratic Party is heavily dependent on a strong turnout on October 20 – something which is by no means assured, especially after the record low turnout of 45 percent in Upper-House elections last year

The party appears, however, to be particularly popular with urban voters, long sacrificed by the mainstream parties at the expense of special interest groups such as farmers and shopkeepers. *(AFP)*

Italy Replaces Secret Service Chiefs

ROME — Italy's center-left government replaced the heads of the country's secret service agencies on Friday in a move that raised protests from the opposition

An official statement said the change at the top of the intelligence tree was connected to a planned reform of the secret services, never far from controversy in a country where plots real or imagined surface regularly.

Vittorio Stelo, the prefect or chief law and order official in Turin, was named to head the civilian intelligence service SISDE with an admiral, Gianfranco Battelli, appointed to the military intelligence agency SISMI.

Leadership of CESIS, an umbrella body meant to monitor and coordinate the work of the two services, was also changed, with Florence prefect Francesco Berardino named secretary general.

The new men replace heads of the three bodies who were appointed just two years ago by the center-right government led by media magnate Silvio Berlusconi.

His opposition freedom alliance criticized the changes as an act of arrogance by the 'Olive Tree' coalition government of Prime Minister Romano Prodi, which was appointed last May.

"You really get the impression that the Olive Tree is desperately trying to occupy everything before it is too late," center-right political pier Ferdinando Casini said.

Another Berlusconi ally, hard right politician Maurizio Gasparri, said the government had given preference to 'the systematic occupation of power over a calm and serious study of the problems'.

The criticisms were rejected by the government, which said the appointments were linked only to the planned intelligence overhaul aimed at what the statement said was a 'clear definition and distribution of duties between the services'.

"I don't understand why the Freedom Alliance is worried about these changes," Deputy Prime Minister Walter Veltroni said.

(Reuter)

